

CASN News April 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.

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In this edition:

- [Federal Funding Bill Slashes Funding for Ed Technology, literacy, but has a few bright Spots](#)
- [82% of Schools May Earn Failing Grades \(due to NCLB\)](#)
- [Obama says That There Is Too Much Reliance on Testing](#)
- [Schools Around the Nation Focus on STEM](#)
- [Pittsburgh Promise Offers Scholarships to Students](#)
- [All African-American Male Public Charter School Again Achieves 100% Four Year College/University Acceptance Rate](#)
- [Tennessee Advances Measure to Create Stricter Tenure Rules](#)
- [N.Y. State Senate Approves Bill to End Seniority Protection for Teachers](#)
- [More School Boards Back Linking Test Scores to Teacher Evaluations](#)
- [Massachusetts Proposes Changes to Teacher/Administrator Evaluations](#)
- [One Teacher Inspires Students to Take AP Calculus](#)
- [Defining Curriculum](#)
- [Building a Teaching Profession](#)
- [Opinion: Pulling Together](#)
- [Opinion: Separate, but Unequal](#)

FEDERAL SPENDING BILL SLASHES FUNDING FOR ED TECHNOLOGY AND LITERACY, BUT HAS A FEW BRIGHT SPOTS

Lawmakers in Congress released details on the recently passed spending bill to fund the federal government through September. The bill includes more than \$38 billion in cuts.

It eliminates a number of education programs, including:

- * Educational Technology State grants - \$100 million
- * Literacy Through School Libraries - \$19 million
- * Byrd Honors Scholarship Program - \$42 million

It includes cuts to other education programs, including:

- * School Improvement grants funded at \$536 million, a \$10 million cut
- * Teaching American History funded at \$46 million, a \$73 million cut.
- * GEARUP and TRIO college access program. GearUp would be funded at \$303, a \$20 million cut; TRIO would be funded at \$885 million, a \$25 million cut.

The bill does not restore funding for any of the national earmarks eliminated in the recent stopgap measure, including Teach for America, the National Writing Project, Close Up Foundation, or the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, but it does slice off one percent of the funding for the approximately \$3 billion Teacher Quality State Grants to be used to create a competitive grant program which would give Teach for America, the National Writing Project, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and others the opportunity to compete for funding.

Other Programs that received funds in FY10 but will not receive funds in FY11 include: LEAP, Javits gifted and talented education, grants for Gulf Coast schools, Smaller Learning Communities, and B.J. Stupak Olympic Scholarships.

There would be \$700 million for a new round of Race to the Top funding, which will include a new initiative for early childhood education. There is \$150 million for another round of Investing in Innovation program (i3).

Title I grants to Districts and the Teacher Incentive Fund would be level-funded.

The bill eliminates FY11 funding for Striving Readers, but does not rescind the FY10 funds, as was proposed in H.R.1.

The bill actually slightly increases funding for Head Start.

82% OF SCHOOLS MAY EARN FAILING GRADES (due to NCLB)

Education Secretary Arne Duncan said Wednesday that 82% of the country's schools soon could be considered failing if the No Child Left Behind law is not changed. The administration is seeking to relax some accountability measures in the law. "The law has created dozens of ways for schools to fail and very few ways to help them succeed," Duncan said. "We should get out of the business of labeling schools as failures and create a new law that is fair and flexible and focused on the schools and students most at risk."

OBAMA SAYS THERE IS TOO MUCH EMPHASIS ON STANDARDIZED TESTS

President Barack Obama said Monday that he envisions a new federal education law that relies less on standardized tests to measure achievement. "Too often what we have been doing is using these tests to punish students or to, in some cases, punish schools," he said during a town hall event. Obama also pointed out that over-testing can take the fun out of learning for students. He said standardized tests should not be the only measure of student -- and school -- achievement, and that perhaps tests should not be administered annually, but rather every few years.

SCHOOLS AROUND THE NATION FOCUS ON STEM

More schools are beginning to focus on science, technology, engineering and math instruction as a push to focus more on the subjects gains steam -- and private funding -- nationwide. Some are calling for science knowledge to be measured as part of the requirements of No Child Left Behind, and the National Science Teachers Association is developing new national standards that the group hopes is included as part of the common core curriculum. Efforts also are under way to offer teachers more training and professional development in STEM instruction.

PITTSBURGH PROMISE OFFERS SCHOLARSHIPS TO STUDENTS

A college scholarship program in Pittsburgh will require students to receive an "advanced" score on state tests or a 600 or higher on the SAT to be eligible for the newly increased maximum award of \$40,000, set to take effect with the class of 2012. According to the new requirements, students would receive \$5,000 each for top scores in writing or reading and \$10,000 for an advanced score in math on state tests.

ALL AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AGAIN ACHIEVES 100% FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY ACCEPTANCE RATE

All 104 seniors at Chicago's only public school for black, male students have been accepted to a four-year college or university -- the second straight year the school has achieved a 100% acceptance rate. The Urban Prep Charter Academy for Young Men features a rigorous academic curriculum, with extended school days and strict discipline policies. Educators at the school are available to provide extra help after school and on weekends, and many continue to provide support to ensure that the school's alumni complete college as well.

TENNESSEE ADVANCES MEASURE TO CREATE STRICTER TENURE RULES

Legislators in the Tennessee House of Representatives passed a bill requiring that teachers work five years instead of three to be eligible for tenure. The measure also would allow tenure protections to be revoked if teachers do not meet certain performance standards. A bill already has cleared the state Senate, and Governor Bill Haslam is expected to sign a final proposal when it is completed.

N.Y. SENATE APPROVES BILL TO END SENIORITY PROTECTION FOR TEACHERS

The New York State Senate recently passed a bill to end New York City's "last-in, first-out" policy for teachers, paving the way for performance and other considerations to be used in implementing layoffs. The bill also must win approval in the state Assembly, where it is expected to face some opposition. In response to the passage of the bill, Gov. Andrew Cuomo says he will expedite plans to enact a new teacher-evaluation system that could be in place by the 2011-12 school year.

MORE SCHOOL BOARDS BACK LINKING TEST SCORES TO TEACHER EVALUATIONS

"Across the country, ineffective teachers are consistently allowed to remain in their classrooms while great teachers toil without recognition, a problem that must be solved by fixing a flawed evaluation system that typically fails to include student performance, according to a report released Thursday."

According to Jim Hull, senior policy analyst at the association's Center for Public Education and author of a report backed by the National School Boards Association, "more than 99% of public school teachers get a "satisfactory" rating when it comes to job performance Public education

needs a better way to judge teachers, one that uses test scores to show which instructors are most effective in boosting student performance." said Hull, a senior policy analyst at the association's Center for Public Education.

Using test scores to evaluate teachers is a hot-button topic in education. Among others, President Obama and the the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation support the idea. Now the nation's largest school board association is getting behind it. (Source: S.F. Chronicle)

MASSACHUSETTS PROPOSES CHANGES TO TEACHER/ ADMINISTRATOR EVALUATIONS

Massachusetts education chief Mitchell Chester is proposing sweeping changes to the way educators are evaluated. Under the proposal, teachers and administrators would be rewarded when students demonstrate more than a year's progress on state standardized tests and other exams. If students perform poorly, educators would be placed on "improvement plans" and possibly dismissed. A final vote on the proposal by the state school board is scheduled for June. (source: Boston Globe)

ONE TEACHER INSPIRES STUDENTS TO TAKE AP CALCULUS

A San Diego teacher has turned Advanced Placement calculus into the most popular course at his school through a combination of dedication and engaging teaching methods. Jonathan Winn, who recently was named his district's High School Teacher of the Year, said he nearly ended his teaching career after only two years but was inspired to stay by a fellow educator who believed all students could succeed in math. Winn now teaches AP calculus in the school's theater to accommodate a class of 100 students. (link includes a video featuring Winn and another math teacher who inspired him.) <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/masterful-teacher-jonathan-winn-calculus?>

DEFINING CURRICULUM

Determining how national education standards will influence classroom lessons is drawing opinions from all sides, with some debating how to define

"curriculum." Some say a curriculum is a set of larger ideas that guide instruction, while others say it is the actual lesson plan. At issue is whether states and districts want their individual lessons dictated to them, with some saying they are concerned about a lack of local input in those decisions.

BUILDING A TEACHING PROFESSION

Writing as a guest on The Washington Post's Answer Sheet blog, Linda Darling-Hammond says that the recent and first-ever International Summit on Teaching, convened in New York City, showed "more clearly than ever that the United States has been pursuing an approach to teaching almost diametrically opposed to that pursued by the highest-achieving nations." The summit gathered government officials and union leaders from 16 nations, and the contrast in attitude toward teaching between international participants and Americans "could not have been more stark." Officials from countries like Finland and Singapore described building a high-performing teaching profession by enabling all teachers to enter high-quality preparation programs, generally at the masters' degree level, where they receive a salary while they prepare. There, teaching students learn research-based strategies and train with experts in model schools attached to their universities. They enter a well-paid profession -- in Singapore earning as much as beginning doctors -- where they are supported by mentor teachers and have 15 or more hours a week to work and learn together. Schools are equitably funded and have the latest in technology and materials. If we are ever to regain our educational standing in the world, writes Darling-Hammond, our leaders must be willing to take a step toward taking teaching seriously.

Read more: http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/darling-hammond-us-vs-highest-achieving-nations-in-education/2011/03/22/ABkNeaCB_blog.html

OPINION: PULLING TOGETHER

In an opinion piece in The Christian Science Monitor, Irving Hamer Jr. and Ken Foster write that as state legislatures and teacher unions clash across the country, the tone of the national conversation is further widening the historical rift between labor and management. Hamer and Foster, deputy schools superintendent and union leader, ask their peers to consider the situation in their own city of Memphis, Tennessee. Two years ago, the Memphis Education Association (the union) and the school administration joined forces to overhaul the school system. With funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, they launched the Teacher Effectiveness Initiative, which focuses on giving teachers tools and support to raise student achievement. Hamer and Foster concede there are disagreements, but each week union and management sit at the same table and work

through disputes. "We are plotting the district's future together," Hamer and Foster write. "Because in setting a common goal, and working together to achieve that goal, all of us have the chance to achieve greatness. Even more important, we can offer a shot at greatness to our students." <http://www.schoolleadership20.com/forum/topics/talking-in-memphis-when>

OPINION PIECE: SEPARATE, BUT UNEQUAL

One of the most powerful tools for improving achievement of poor black and Hispanic students is seldom considered, writes Bob Herbert in The New York Times, despite the known fact that it's difficult to get consistently good results in schools with high concentrations of poverty. Years of evidence show that poor kids of all ethnicities do better when educated alongside their middle class peers. Therefore, "breaking up these toxic concentrations of poverty would seem to be a logical and worthy goal," writes Herbert -- but this would mean racial and ethnic integration.

Despite all the "babble about a post-racial America," Herbert says it's easier to talk about pornography in polite company than integration. According to Herbert, present-day obsessions with firing teachers, attacking unions, and creating charter schools have done little to improve outcomes for disadvantaged students of color. Herbert feels that if we really want to improve the education of poor children, we must remove them from environments "smothered by poverty." He therefore favors integration for integration's sake, in lieu of the "humiliating dancing around the perennially uncomfortable issue of race."

We pretend no one's racist, and everyone's in favor of helping poor black and Hispanic students to succeed in school, "but the consensus is that those efforts are best confined to the kids' own poor black neighborhoods."

To read the full editorial, please see: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/22/opinion/22herbert.html>

SOME WEB RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Access, Analyze, Act

This series of lesson plans and accompanying resources addresses economic theory in ways that will help students translate theory into concrete reality. Each lesson plan incorporates a case study, and there are introductory video clips (including some narrated by PBS commentators), and interactive content for each. Sample topics include health care, unemployment, labor, imports and exports, and general economic theory. There is also a valuable economics glossary (with a widget for your class homepage that allows students to access the glossary directly), podcasts, and links to further

resources. As a follow-up or related assignment, you might challenge students to create their own multimedia explanations of key concepts using GlogsterEDU (<http://edu.glogster.com/>) or a concept map using webspiration.

"Hot" Web Tools (some free, some not)

A from "Nine Hot Web Tools for Students" by Dave Saltman, Harvard Ed, March/April 2011: Tools Designed to let students take learning into their own hands:

* Animoto - streamlining student presentation using Animoto, students can aggregate photos and videos to create a show complete with musical background. (<http://animoto.com>) (both free and paid tools)

* with XtraNormal, students can create avatars for web-based dramatic presentations(<http://www.xtranormal.com>) "xtranormal's mission is to bring moviemaking to the people")

* GlogsterEDU allows students to create a "glog" or "graphical log" so that students aggregate different media in one place 00 a virtual poster -- on a specific topic or concept.

* Scratch, a freeware program (<http://scratch.mit.edu>) allows students to reason out and execute programming, using a graphical interface created at MIT's Media Lab.

* The University of Colorado's PhET Interactive Simulations (Physics Education Technology Project) suite of free online simulation tools.

* Algodoo can illustrate the relationship between radius and velocity in orbiting objects by adjusting different settings for mass, density, friction value, and others. <http://www.algodoo.com>

* Phun (free, earlier version of Algodoo)

HotMath.Com - highly visual interactive math (free and paid content)

CoolMath.com - includes resources for pre-algebra, algebra, precalc/ calculus/ geometry art