

CASN News April 2007

**CASN News** is supported by the Career Academy Support Network (CASN) at University of California Berkeley

Graduate School of Education. Our focus is on high schools and high school redesign, especially redesign which includes Academies/small schools/smaller learning communities.

CASN believes that quality teaching and learning are at the heart of any good high school and that every student has a right to rigor, relevance, and supportive adult relationships. We also work to build community engagement and partnerships which support student success.

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Reminder: Any CASN\_News group member can post a high-school related message, query, resource, etc. to the CASN\_News community by simply sending your email to [CASN\\_News@yahoogroups.com](mailto:CASN_News@yahoogroups.com). To contact the CASN News editor, email [gaia\\_pc@yahoo.com](mailto:gaia_pc@yahoo.com) or [patricia510@gmail.com](mailto:patricia510@gmail.com).

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*"If we replace anonymity with community, sorting with support, and bureaucracy with autonomy, we can create systems of schools that truly help all students achieve." - Tom Vander Ark*

*"What the best and wisest parent wants for his (or her) own child that must the community want for all of its children. Any other idea...is narrow and unlovely." - John Dewey*

*"It is not enough to say that all children can learn or that no be left behind; the work involves...achieving the vision of an American education system that enables all children to succeed in school, work, and life." - Council of Chief State School Officers*

### **U.S. ED DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES FY 2007 FUNDING LEVELS**

As 2006 came to a close, Congress had only passed two of the eleven Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 appropriations bills. At that point, the Republican leadership passed a temporary funding resolution that postponed final decisions on education spending until February 2007. On February 14—over four months after the first day of the fiscal year— Congress passed & President Bush signed a resolution that allocated funds to the U.S. Department of Education. Because of the delay, the department was unable to provide final funding levels for individual programs until late last month.

According to the FY 2007 operating plan that the department released on March 20, several programs will receive an increase in funding over FY 2006. Among them, Title I will receive a \$130 million increase, spending on special education will increase by \$200 million, and funding for the Striving Readers program will increase by about \$2 million. Also, the maximum Pell grant award will increase from \$4,050 to \$4,310, the first such increase in four years.

In addition, the Title I School Improvement Fund, which is funded for the first time, will receive \$125 million that will be targeted to the 6,700 schools that failed to meet No Child Left Behind requirements in the 2005–2006 school year. Schools will use these funds to implement improvement activities, such as teacher training, tutoring programs, and curriculum upgrades.

A chart of selected education programs and their funding levels for FY 2007 is available at <http://www.all4ed.org/legislative/FY08budget.html> . The chart also includes the amounts that programs would receive under the budget proposal for FY 2008 that President Bush submitted in early February.

### **BROAD FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES URBAN ED PRIZE FINALISTS**

Broad Foundation Announces 2007 Finalists for Urban Education Prize

The Los Angeles-based Broad Foundation has announced the five finalists for this year's Broad Prize for Urban Education, a \$1 million award given annually to the nation's outstanding urban public school districts. The prize honors districts that are making the greatest

improvements in student achievement while reducing achievement gaps among ethnic groups and between high- and low-income students. The winner — announced in the fall — will receive \$500,000 in college scholarships for graduating seniors; each of the other finalists will receive \$125,000. This year's finalists are the Bridgeport Public Schools in Bridgeport, Connecticut; the Long Beach Unified School District in Long Beach, California; Miami-Dade County Public Schools; the New York City Department of Education; and the Northside Independent School District in northwest San Antonio. (NOTE: Long Beach Unified won this prize in 2003.)

### **NINE STATES TO GIVE COMMON ALGEBRA II EXAM**

Nine states, including Arkansas, Kentucky, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island, have agreed to give a common end-of-course math test for Algebra II. The test, designed by Achieve, Inc., is described by some officials as a step towards national standards.

[http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2007-04-10-common-math-test\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2007-04-10-common-math-test_N.htm)

### **SOFTWARE'S BENEFITS ON TESTS IN DOUBT: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION STUDY SAYS TOOLS DON'T RAISE SCORES**

Educational software, a \$2 billion-a-year industry that has become the darling of school systems across the country, has no significant impact on student performance, according to a study by the U.S. Department of Education.

The long-awaited report amounts to a rebuke of educational technology, a business whose growth has been spurred by schools desperate for ways to meet the testing mandates of President Bush's No Child Left Behind law.

Industry officials played down the study and attributed most of the problems to poor training and execution of the programs in classrooms.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/04/AR2007040402715.html>

### **NEED FOR WORKFORCE WITH TECHNICAL SKILLS DRIVES PUSH TOWARD MORE TECHNICAL CLASSES/PROGRAMS IN HIGH SCHOOLS**

As baby boomers retire and states seek to attract technology companies, lawmakers and companies are increasingly looking to

high schools to help ensure a tech-savvy workforce. States such as California and Florida are creating career academies aimed at preparing high school graduates for well-paying technical jobs.

### **FLORIDA CONSIDERS MEASURES TO TIE HIGH SCHOOLS TO INDUSTRY**

The Florida State Legislature recently proposed a number of bills that would tie hs curricula more closely to local industry. The Senate approved a bill requiring all hss to create career academies that graduate students with industry certification tied to needs of area businesses. Other proposed bills include tax credits for businesses providing paid internships to hs students & a nonprofit grant program to help universities market & sell their research & inventions.

[http://www.sptimes.com/2007/04/02/State/Programs\\_would\\_smooth.shtml](http://www.sptimes.com/2007/04/02/State/Programs_would_smooth.shtml)

### **STUDENT PLAY ABOUT THE IRAQ WAR TO BE STAGED OFF BROADWAY**

After a Connecticut high school principal canceled a play students were preparing about the Iraq war, the Public Theater, a venerable Off Broadway institution, will stage the work in June. The principal had cited concerns about political balance and distressing soldiers' families when students wanted to perform "Voices in Conflict" as the spring play; officials offered no objection to off-campus productions.

### **DEMAND FOR CAREER-RELATED HS CLASSES SOARS**

From Maryland to Los Angeles, school officials are overwhelmed by demand for career-track programs in fields such as pre-engineering & sports medicine. Their hope is that career-oriented education can help keep potential dropouts in school by motivating students who might otherwise see little link between classwork & the real world.

### **MORE STUDENTS GETTING LAPTOPS INSTEAD OF TEXTBOOKS; LOUISIANA HS BECOMES LATEST TO SWITCH TO AN ALL-DIGITAL CURRICULUM**

This fall, many students at Bolton HS in Alexandria, Louisiana, won't be carrying around textbooks and paper notebooks, but instead will have laptop computers as part of the school's push

toward an all-digital curriculum. The school is following the lead of pioneering institutions such as Arizona's Empire HS which abandoned textbooks in favor of laptops in 2005.

### **STUDY SHOWS HS STUDENTS NEED DEEP KNOWLEDGE MORE THAN BROAD KNOWLEDGE**

New standards still don't prepare high schoolers for college and cover too many topics with too little depth, a new ACT survey says. "A rigorous understanding of fundamentals" of algebra, the scientific process and grammar are most important, according to college professors who work with first-year students (including professors who work with college students in remedial classes.)

When asked what was most important for students to learn, the study found, by discipline:

#### **Math:**

High school teachers put more weight on advanced content, while college instructors said "a rigorous understanding of fundamentals" was more important. More than half (55%) of faculty ranked "basic operations and applications" most important, compared with 40% of high school faculty. Among material most desired by college faculty but covered the least in high school were algebraic problems such as solving quadratic equations and factoring.

#### **Science:**

High school teachers consistently rated factual knowledge more important than process and inquiry skills, such as understanding a hypothesis. But that's what college instructors said they want most. For example, college faculty generally ranked "evaluating the similarities and differences, or strengths and weaknesses, of scientific viewpoints" important, while high school teachers were more likely to cite "understanding the physics principles involved in collisions" and "knowing the processes of how proteins are made inside of cells."

#### **English and writing:**

More than a third (35%) of college instructors placed high importance on basic grammar and usage such as sentence structure and punctuation, compared with 10% of high school teachers. Similarly, high school faculty said the "ability to write

an effective introduction and conclusion to a piece of writing" was the most important skill, but college instructors ranked it 30th.

### **Reading:**

High school and college teachers generally agreed on the relative importance of specific skills and identified the teaching of "main ideas and author's approach" as the top skill. But other ACT data show a decline in performance in reading between middle and high school, suggesting that reading skills acquired in middle school are not being deepened in high school. While educators in college and high school agree that reading skills are important, such skills "need to be incorporated into state standards," the study says.

#### WELL-PREPARED FOR COLLEGE?

When asked "How well do you think your state's standards prepare students for college-level work?" high school and college instructors didn't agree. Percentage who answered "well" or "very well":

#### **English/writing**

- High school teachers: 76%
- Post-secondary instructors: 33%

#### **Reading**

- High school teachers: 72%
- Post-secondary instructors: 36%

#### **Math**

- High school teachers: 79%
- Post-secondary instructors: 42%

#### **Science**

- High school teachers: 67%
- Post-secondary instructors: 32%

Source: ACT National Curriculum Survey, 2005-2006

[http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2007-04-09-teachers-professors-differ\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2007-04-09-teachers-professors-differ_N.htm)

To read the full ACT report and policy recommendations:

<http://www.act.org/path/policy/reports/curriculum.html>

### **POLL FINDS GAPS IN OUTLOOKS OF TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS**

Teachers are less likely than administrators to say their students can excel academically, according to a survey released last week showing that educators have strikingly different perspectives on students and school life.

The study of 4,700 teachers and 267 principals and assistant principals in 12 school districts was conducted by the Council of

Urban Boards of Education, part of the Alexandria, Va.-based National School Boards Association, in an effort to gauge school climate. It was intended to complement a survey of students last year. ( "Reactions to School Climate Vary by Students' Races," April 5, 2006.)

Nearly all the administrators agreed that "students at this school are capable of high achievement on standardized exams," but only three-quarters of the teachers concurred. Far more teachers than administrators said that students were not motivated to learn.

### ***Findings Called Surprise***

Eighty-five percent of administrators disagreed with the statement that most students at their schools would not be successful at community college or a university; only 58 percent of teachers disagreed.

### ***For More Info***

The report, "Where We Teach" March 2007, is available from the National School Boards Association.

Those gaps surprised Brian K. Perkins, the principal researcher on the study and the chairman of the council's steering committee.

"This wasn't anticipated, but it is certainly real," he said. "Now the question is, what do teachers know to give them a perspective administrators don't have, and how can that be shared?"

Antonia Cortese, the executive vice president of the American Federation of Teachers, one of several education groups that collaborated on the study, said teachers' feedback on students was less rosy than administrators' because of their daily classroom experience.

### **Views on Students**

Teachers offered a markedly less optimistic view of students' abilities than administrators did.

SOURCE: National School Boards Association



“It’s not a question of expectations,” she said. “It’s a question of the reality of the way things are. Teachers have a realistic picture of what it would take to get [students] over the hurdles.”

Eighty-six percent of administrators said their teachers use good professional judgment; among the teacher respondents, 76 percent said administrators trust their professional judgment.

Ninety-four percent of the administrators said they actively seek out opportunities for teachers to learn new instructional methods, while 78 percent of the teachers said they had sufficient opportunities of that kind. Ninety-five percent of administrators said teachers at their schools could benefit from more professional development, but only 68 percent of the teachers thought so.

## **BIRTHRIGHT: MAKING COLLEGE ACCESS COMMONPLACE FOR ALL**

All across the U.S. this spring, students are making graduation plans.

Their institutions will soon send names to be printed on diplomas.

According to the Census Bureau, a diploma really matters.

On the average,

during an adult's working life, college graduates earn nearly one

million dollars more than those who only finish high school. They will be

more engaged as

citizens, will contribute much more to the general good through their taxes and philanthropic efforts, and be less reliant on

government services. Moreover, they also enjoy a higher quality of life,

putting aside more savings, enjoying more leisure time and career

flexibility. An investment in education is an investment in

us all.

(NOTE: See Ray Bacchetti's "Birthright" Piece in the accompanying CASN News "Articles Worth a Read" email message.

Bacchetti tells the story of his family's educational experiences over three generations and reminds us that access to higher education is one of the blessings that every American should expect as a birthright, not a special privilege.)

**REPORT: PREPARING FOR THE PERFECT STORM --  
REPORT ON THE FORUM  
TAKING ACTION TOGETHER: DEVELOPING A  
NATIONAL ACTION PLAN  
TO ADDRESS THE "T&E" OF STEM**

This report from the Education Development Center includes

recommendations from STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) & business professionals for actions to build a robust technology & engineering pipeline.

<http://www.secure.edc.org/publications/prodview.asp?1804>

**REPORT: HIGH SCHOOLS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY – Ventura County**

**High Performing High Schools Commission (CA)**

*(thank you to several CASN Newsites for forwarding this resource)*

The Commission's report offers findings and recommendations on what teachers, counselors, administrators, and board members can do to

meet the challenges that schools face. The report focuses on the critical needs of

addressing the needs of English learners, developing professional learning communities, and enacting policies and practices

to keep pace with advances in technology. Also includes some excellent resource/reference links.

<http://www.vcoe.org/Default.aspx?tabid=1338>

**REMINDER: REGISTER NOW FOR (FREE) TEACHER-TO-TEACHER BEST PRACTICES SUMMER WORKSHOPS**

The U.S. Department of Education has named 23 cities as the sites for its annual summer regional workshops. Teachers attending the workshops will learn best practices from their colleagues who have had success in raising student achievement. Each workshop will include a number of breakout sessions where effective teachers & practitioners will share strategies that have been effective in their classrooms, schools & districts.

A wide variety of subjects will be covered at the various workshops, including math, science, reading, foreign languages, art, history, and early childhood. A number of the workshops are sponsored by corporations, such as NPS, Target, Microsoft, and Siemens. Registration for the workshops is free but participants must pay for their own transportation and lodging.

Special lodging rates for participants are available.

<https://www.t2tweb.us/Workshops/Registration.asp>

**TEACHING THE LEVEES - FREE CURRICULUM AND DVD. SIGN UP NOW.**

"Teaching *The Levees*" is a curriculum that uses Spike Lee's movie,

"When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts," from HBO

Documentary Films, as a text to encourage democratic dialogue

about race and class in America. The curriculum asks participants to

consider what they understand about these topics, to test their

understandings against other points of view, and to formulate a response through civic engagement.

The documentary, *When The Levees Broke*, is rated TV-14. The curriculum lessons are aimed at three audiences: high school social studies students (broken down into lessons for history, geography, civics, and economics courses, and a media literacy component suitable for high school and college students), college students in history-related courses, and adult learners in civic, religious, and community groups.

The curriculum package is currently being developed at Teachers College, Columbia University. Through the generous support of the Rockefeller Foundation, free copies will be made available to teachers, schools, libraries, and community groups. The package will include copies of the "When the Levees Broke" DVDs and the curriculum book.

### **FOR STUDENTS: ANNUAL WEST POINT BRIDGE DESIGN CONTEST**

The United States Military Academy third annual West Point Bridge Design Contest is in progress. The purpose of the contest is to provide middle school and high school students with a realistic, engaging introduction to engineering. This contest is provided as a service to education--and as a tribute to the Academy's two hundred years of service to the United States of America. Information about the contest is available at: <http://bridgecontest.usma.edu/index.htm>

### **FEATURED (& NEWLY LAUNCHED) WEBSITE: TEACHERTUBE -- OUR VERY OWN ED VERSION OF YOUTUBE**

Teachers now have their very own version of YouTube. *TeacherTube*, launched in March 2007, is a video-sharing site designed exclusively for educators. Created by a 14-year veteran educator (with technical help from family members), the site aims to "fill a need for a more educationally focused, safe venue for teachers, schools, and home learners."

TeacherTube provides many of the same tools featured on the

popular YouTube site, which is blocked by many schools. Teachers can use the TeacherTube to upload and share instructional videos, comment on and rank videos, and create video groups to bring together users with similar interests. Videos can also be easily embedded on Web pages. In keeping with its educational focus, the site's producers aim to feature mainly instructional and professional development videos. Users are encouraged to "flag" videos that might be inappropriate. Videos currently on the site include specific lessons, class projects, demonstrations of unique instructional approaches, and expressions of educational philosophy.  
<http://www.teachertube.com>

### **FEATURED WEBSITE: SUTREE.COM**

"E-learning Knowledge Solutions," an Israeli based internet company, has recently launched SuTree.com -- a social bookmarking site that aims to be the "Digg" of e-learning. The site lets users bookmark and organize free video tutorials, video lessons, video how to and DIY from all over the web. Gideon Zailer, CEO of "E-learning Knowledge Solutions" and an e-learning expert says that SuTree is part of the revolution in e-learning that is taking place with the new advances in the internet. "Learning is basically a social act," he explains, "and now when everyone can share knowledge through bookmarking, publishing blogs, creating videos or even just commenting, e-learning can also be social." Zailer believes that educational and instructional videos are the next big thing in Web 2.0. He wanted to create a site that would harness the power of communities to find and index free educational and instructional videos.

Launched only a few weeks ago, SuTree already has more than 4,800 links to instructional videos in various categories. Categories include: school, arts, fashion, food, health, finance, music, sports, travel, and more. According to the site's owners the goal is reaching around 20,000 lessons in the first year.  
<http://www.SuTree.com>

### **FEATURED WEBSITE: THINKFINITY.ORG**

For the second year in a row, readers of Edutopia, a publication of the George Lucas Educational Foundation, rated Verizon Thinkfinity

(formerly MarcoPolo), the best site to download free lessons and materials in the magazine's annual readers' survey. NOTE: The Verizon Foundation recently announced that Verizon will invest \$31 Million in Thinkfinity over the next three years.  
<http://www.Thinkfinity.org>

**FEATURED WEBSITE: OERCOMMONS.ORG** (For Free High-Quality Teaching & Learning Resources)

The Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education has just released OER Commons, the first comprehensive open learning network that enables users to find freely available high-quality teaching and learning materials. Created with & for educators, students, & self-learners, this broad selection of open educational resources for K-12 & higher education can be browsed, searched, & enhanced using collaborative social networking features, such as tags, ratings, & reviews. The goal of OER Commons is to bring innovation to teachers and learners around the world. Within its first month, OER Commons has forged alliances with over 60 major content partners in order to provide a single point of access through which educators & learners can search across collections to access over 9,000 open educational resources, read & provide descriptive information about each resource, & retrieve the ones they need. There are a wide range of educational resources, from complete courses to learning modules to library documents, & from algebra to zoology, all in one place. Many of the resources use one of the popular Creative Commons licenses.

<http://www.oercommons.org/>

**FEATURED WEBSITE: QUICKMUSE (*Poetry a la IronPoet or poetry creation in motion*)**

QuickMuse.com is the brainchild of Ken Gordon. Gordon's original idea was to capture the poet's creative process online for the world to see & to add an element of improvisation to the procedure. To accomplish this, he employed a clever piece of technology devised by a Web wizard named Fletcher Moore.

QuickMuse pits prominent poets such as Robert Pinsky, Charles Bernstein, & Mary Jo Salter against one other & the clock in what the creator Gordon calls an agon, from an ancient Greek word meaning "contest" or "challenge." In an exercise of literary

improvisation, two poets are given a topic, a quote, a picture, or some other prompt & then have 15 minutes to compose a poem. The process is recorded & posted online using a "poematic system," a keystroke-logging program.

Although it seems like a contest, there is no final winner. "There is some element of competition," Gordon says, "and a poet is always in competition with what he has written before. But it's a mistake to view QuickMuse as a win-or-lose situation. Instead, we'd like students to look at the site & think, 'If these famous writers can be so open and brave with their writing, maybe I can do the same.'

The site also vividly illustrates the malleability of language. "Any poet knows how much revision goes into a piece, but the nonprofessional, the sixteen-year-old in the classroom, has no idea," says Gordon. "This site really shows revision in its most elemental state. By making that visible, we are providing a very powerful example for would-be writers." The resulting "main event" is archived on the site & can be played back, giving students (including aspiring young poets) the rare chance to look over the poet's shoulder as the work takes shape. Typos, deletions, meanderings, & musings made during the fifteen-minute period are all tracked for the onlooker. (The time span can be sped up for those fidgety kids to whom a quarter of an hour is an eternity.) <http://www.quickmuse.com>

**WEBSITE (*as into each life a little fun must come*) :**  
**MAKEBELIEFS.COMIX.COM**

Looking for an alternative to a quiz or an assignment of vocabulary definitions simply written on notebook paper? Trying to find a way to prompt students to write a short passages? Trying to teach simple dialog to ESL/ELL students? Working on appropriate language and interpersonal skills with emotional support students? Looking for a creative way to make clever newsletter additions, bulletin board items, or class rules? Use this great online tool for both students and teachers to create web-based or printed comic strips from a selection of characters and voice bubbles-- all with your OWN text!

<http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/> (requires FLASH)

### **FEATURED LESSON: IT'S MY LIFE: MULTIMODAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY PROJECT**

In this lesson, students write autobiographies, illustrating the stories & setting them to music. Students brainstorm lists of important events in their lives, along with images & music that represent those events. They then create storyboards in preparation for the final PowerPoint project, which they present to their peers in class. If PowerPoint is unavailable, students might create posters & soundtracks using cassette or CD players.  
[http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson\\_view.asp?id=1051](http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=1051)

### **A CALL FOR PROPOSALS: FACILITATE A SESSION AT THE COALITION OF ESSENTIAL SCHOOLS FALL FORUM 2007 IN DENVER, COLORADO**

CES National is now accepting proposals for Fall Forum 2007 sessions. This year, CES explores what it means to take a stand for the relationships, pedagogy, structures, and policies required to transform all public schools into personalized, equitable, academically challenging places. Share how you take a principled stand. CES welcomes proposals for sessions that explicitly address our theme, especially those that offer specific examples of the successes and challenges of enacting CES Common Principles. The deadline to submit proposals is May 14.

**SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL** Applicants may submit proposals for either workshops, interest group gatherings, or critical friends conversations, each 1 hour & 45 minutes in length. Proposals must be submitted online at <http://www.essentialschools.org>. In addition to a user-friendly application form, the CES Web site provides detailed instructions for submitting a proposal, including application guidelines, sample responses, and the scoring rubric that will be used to evaluate proposals. Applicants should be available to facilitate their sessions either Friday, November 9, or Saturday, November 10.

CES expects a highly participatory approach, one that is hands-on and minds-on AND encourages sessions that are led by or prominently feature students, families, and community members. Proposals should fall within one of the following content areas:



Teaching & Learning; Assessment; School Culture & Practices;  
Leadership; Family & Community Connections