

# CASN NEWS

SUMMER EDITION 2007

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*In this edition:*

- [\\* FY 2008 Ed Budget Watch....So Far, So Good](#)*
- [\\* Ed Legislation Watch: Graduation Promise Act](#)*
- [\\* Congress Passes Math/Science Competiveness Bill](#)*
- [\\* Texas District Considers No Longer Grading Electives](#)*
- [\\* Wisconsin Offers Students a College Guarantee](#)*
- [\\* Growth Models Gaining Traction](#)*
- [\\* Trimesters Gaining Popularity in Michigan](#)*
- [\\* The Principal Principle](#)*
- [\\* Some Seniors Lose Spots at Elite Colleges](#)*
- [\\* New Law Creates South Carolina Virtual Schools Program](#)*
- [\\* More Hispanic and Black Students Take A.P. Exams](#)*

- [\\* \*Millions Enroll in CA Community Colleges, Few Graduate\*](#)
- [\\* \*California's Student Data System "Off Track"\*](#)
- [\\* \*Exit Exams Impact Graduation Rates in 22 States\*](#)
- [\\* \*Emerging Trend: On Line Learning Communities Change Professional Development\*](#)
- [\\* \*Emerging Trend: Endowments Used to Support PK-12 Programs\*](#)
- [\\* \*Emerging Trend: High School Grads Come With a Guarantee\*](#)
- [\\* \*Nine Civil Rights Groups Unite to Begin Campaign for HS Equity: A Plan for Success\*](#)
- [\\* \*Five States Seek to Discover if U.S. Students Can Compete Globally\*](#)
- [\\* \*Budget, Bureaucracy and the Challenges School Districts Face\*](#)
- [\\* \*Building Smart Education Systems\*](#)
- [\\* \*Three Common School Reform Mistakes \(& How to Avoid Them\)\*](#)
- [\\* \*Online Bibliography: Districts and Educational Improvement\*](#)
- [\\* \*Study: Academic Standards Vary Greatly by State\*](#)
- [\\* \*Report: Condition of Education 2007\*](#)
- [\\* \*Report: Standards-Based Accountability Under No Child Left Behind\*](#)
- [\\* \*Report: Aligned Expectations? A Closer Look at College Admissions and Placement Tests\*](#)
- [\\* \*Report: A Voice from the Middle\*](#)
- [\\* \*Report: Not for the Timid: Breaking Down Barriers, Creating Breakthrough High Schools in Ohio\*](#)

*\* Report: Boosters, Brokers and Bridges: Real World Ideas for College Access Projects*

*\* Report: Understanding High School Graduation Rates*

*\* Report: Academic Interventions to Help Students Meet Rigorous Standards: State Policy Options*

*\* Policy Brief: State and District-level Support for Successful Transitions into High School*

*\* Policy Brief: Accountability*

*\* Policy Brief: Standards, Assessments and Educational Policy: In Pursuit of Genuine Accountability - Linda Darling-Hammond*

*\* Report: Toward Ensuring a Smooth Transition into High School*

*\* Snapshot: Managing the Transition to Ninth Grade in a Comprehensive Urban High School*

*\* Quick Stats Fact Sheet: The First Year of High School*

*\* Research Brief: Findings from the Early College High School Initiative: A Look at Best Practices and Lessons Learned Regarding a Dual Enrollment Program*

*\* Report: Improving Reading/Writing in Middle/High Schools*

*\* Recommendations from Leap the Gap Youth Empowerment Project*

*\* Opportunity to Participate in WWII Veterans' History Project*

*\* Some Funding and Award Opportunities*

*“Champions aren t made in gyms. Champions are made from something they*

*have deep inside them—a desire, a dream, a vision.”—Muhammad Ali*

*"For too many communities, the school improvement process has felt like an exercise in labeling and public humiliation, without accompanying help or support. And while it is not wrong to expect school districts and states to take responsibility for helping in their struggling schools, there has not been adequate energy or resources dedicated to building capacity in this area. States, districts and schools desperately need more federal help -- in the form of solid, widely disseminated research and financial support -- about what it takes to turn around chronically low-performing schools, as well as what it takes to boost the academic achievement of students who enter school behind or fall behind over the course of their academic career. Especially high priority should be devoted to answering fundamental questions about best practice for teaching Limited English Proficient students."*

*-Kati Haycock, (president, The Education Trust), Testimony Before The No Child Left Behind Commission On NCLB Reauthorization*

**SUMMER TIME AND THE LEARNING IS EASY.... CASN News:**

In consideration of the fact that many CASN News participants are on vacation and knowledge of the fact that many school email boxes tend to overflow during this season, CASN News is on summer hiatus.

With the exception of any important, timely News Alerts and this mid-summer edition, CASN News will not resume regular newswires and the CASN HS Files until late August/early September. Wishes for a learningful and joyful summer.

## **FY 2008 ED BUDGET WATCH....**

### **Update on House Appropriations for FY 2008:**

On July 19, the House of Representatives passed its version of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), and Education appropriations bill. The \$607 billion bill contains \$152 billion in discretionary spending, which includes approximately \$62 billion for the U.S. Department of Education. The bill represents an increase of \$5.5 billion in discretionary spending over FY 2007 and is about \$6 billion more than President Bush had requested. The news continues to be good and includes restoration of both Carl Perkins funds and Smaller Learning Communities funds (both of which were not in President Bush's funding proposal.) There are also increases proposed for Advanced Placement, Counseling and other secondary-ed related initiatives. Update on Senate Appropriations for FY2008: the Senate Appropriations Committee approved the FY2008 Labor, Health, Human Services and Education funding bill for education.

This bill includes an increase of \$2.9 billion (4.4%) overall for education. Ti-

title I Grants to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) will receive an increase of \$1.1 billion (8.3%), and Title II Teacher Quality Grants received nearly \$2.9 billion, the same amount of funding as FY 07. The next steps will involve coming to agreement on elements of the Senate and House versions of the FY2008 appropriations bill. (NOTE: The Senate proposal does NOT now include FY 2008 funding for Smaller Learning Communities; however, SLC funding is in the House proposal..)

NOTE: Educators will need to fight hard to keep these increases in the final FY2008 appropriations bill. Remember to contact your elected officials in the House and Senate to advocate for funding for education and for specific federal programs which are important to you. Remember, too, to say thank you to elected representatives for their support for education.

### **ED LEGISLATION WATCH: GRADUATION PROMISE ACT (GPA)**

Recently, Congressman Ruben Hinojosa (D-TX) introduced new legislation that would make \$2.5 billion in federal funds available for use in transforming the nation's lowest-performing high schools into effective centers of teaching and learning. He was joined by approximately 20 representatives as co-sponsors. Called the Graduation Promise Act (GPA), the bill would leverage statewide systems of high school improvement, support the development of effective school models for struggling students and dropouts, and reform

state policies to remove barriers to high school reform. If enacted into law, the bill would help to ensure that every student graduates from high school prepared for college and the workforce. The GPA authorizes \$2.5 billion in new funding to:

- \* Create a federal-state-local secondary school reform partnership focused on transforming the nation's lowest performing high schools;
  - \* Build capacity for high school improvement and provide resources to ensure high school educators and students facing the highest challenges receive the support they need to succeed;
  - \* Strengthen state systems to identify, differentiate among, and target the level of reform and resources necessary to improve low performing high schools and ensure transparency and accountability for that process;
  - \* Advance the research and development needed to 1) ensure a robust supply of highly effective secondary school models that support the students most at risk of being left behind and 2) identify the most effective reforms;
- Support states in aligning state policies and systems to meet the goal of college and career-ready graduation for all students.

Similar legislation was introduced in the U.S. Senate on April 23 by U.S. Senators Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Richard Burr (R-NC), and Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA)

## **WISCONSIN OFFERS STUDENTS A COLLEGE GUARANTEE**

The state of Wisconsin recently launched the Wisconsin Covenant, an early commitment program that promises eighth-grade students admission and financial aid to attend a state college or university in exchange for earning at least a B average, taking certain college preparatory courses, and being good citizens. More info: <http://www.wisconsin covenant.wi.gov/>

## **CONGRESS PASSES MATH/SCIENCE COMPETITIVENESS BILL**

Congress approved legislation that seeks to bolster mathematics and science education through improved teacher recruitment and training and promote successful classroom practices through federal grants.

The bipartisan legislation had the backing of numerous business and education organizations. The bill now goes to President Bush, who lawmakers believe will sign the bill.

The bill would establish several new federal math and science programs and expand existing ones. If Congress appropriates money for all the programs, it would cost \$43.3 billion over three years, though much of that spending would be devoted to research programs in technology, energy, and other areas.

The measure would broaden the Robert Noyce Scholarship Program, which provides grants of \$10,000 a year to college majors in math- and science-related subjects who agree to teach in high-need schools. Among other changes, the bill would provide awardees of the program, which is administered by the National Science Foundation, up to three years of scholarship funding, instead of the current limit of two years. In addition, scholarship recipients would be given additional time to complete their teacher training, under the legislation.

Furthermore, the proposal addresses some of the math and science priorities identified by President Bush. It would create "Math Now," a program in which the U.S. Department of Education would award grants to states to attempt to implement proven strategies in math instruction. The legislation says the goal is to help students reach grade level in math and prepare them for algebra, a subject most students take in 8th or 9th grade.

### **TEXAS DISTRICT CONSIDERS NO LONGER GRADING ELECTIVES**

Some top Texas seniors shy away from electives, because even top marks in classes like art and band will lower their grade point averages since they aren't weighted like AP and other high-level classes. One Dallas-area district is considering eliminating electives from GPA calculations.

### **GROWTH MODELS GAINING TRACTION**

Increasingly popular "growth models," in which individual student progress is measured, rather than comparing this year's class to the last, showed one district where top students improved less than other students in the past two years and another where mainstreaming was improving scores among students with disabilities. U.S. Department of Ed has allowed 9 states to pilot such models, but some are pushing to amend NCLB to allow such models in any state.

### **TRIMESTERS GAINING POPULARITY IN MICHIGAN**

More Michigan high schools are switching to a trimester system, which is made up of five 70- to 75-minute classes that change every 12 weeks, allowing students to fit more courses in before they graduate. Schools are able to use these extra courses to provide remediation and to increase electives.

<http://www.southbendtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070521/News01/705210326>

### **THE PRINCIPAL PRINCIPLE**

Many things go into making a high school great, but a strong, effective principal is always at the top of the list. This article takes a look at the many roles that a principal must play in a successful school.

<http://www.msnbc.com/id/18754330/site/newsweek>

### **SOME SENIORS LOSE SPOTS AT ELITE COLLEGES**

With increasing competition among top students, some elite U.S. universities are revoking admission for as many as 2% of incoming students whose transcripts took a senioritis nosedive. "It can be quite traumatic," said Susan Wilbur, director of University of California undergraduate admissions. "[But] it is absolutely incumbent upon us to ... maintain the high standards." (source: Los Angeles Times; may require free registration)

<http://www.latimes.com/news/education/la-me-revoke22jun22.1,4151941.story?coll=la-news-learning>

### **NEW LAW CREATES SOUTH CAROLINA VIRTUAL SCHOOL PROGRAM**

South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford recently signed a law that will allow students to enroll in online courses that may not be available to them in their current high school. The law will allow students to earn credits in Advanced Placement, remedial and specialty classes online. It will also ease scheduling conflicts, provide individualized instruction and help students meet graduation requirements.

[http://web.charleston.net/news/2007/may/18/sanford\\_signs\\_virtual\\_school\\_measure/](http://web.charleston.net/news/2007/may/18/sanford_signs_virtual_school_measure/)

### **MORE HISPANIC AND BLACK STUDENTS TAKE AP EXAMS**

More than twice as many Hispanic students and 177% more black students took AP exams in 2005 than in 1997 as overall participation in the exams has more than doubled, according to the U.S. Department of Education's latest education statistics released Thursday. The same report showed the U.S. population of minority students has surged to 42% of public school enrollment, up from 22% three decades ago.

### **MILLIONS ENROLL IN CA COMMUNITY COLLEGES, FEW GRADUATE**

As California leads the country in making community college more accessible, just one in six Californians who seek a two-year degree, certificate or transfer to a four-year school complete the requirements within six years. As many as 80% of incoming students aren't prepared for college work, and 80% work an average of 32 hours weekly. (source: San Diego Tribune)

### **CALIFORNIA'S STUDENT DATA SYSTEM "OFF TRACK"**

A dip in state revenue has dealt a blow to a planned computerized student-tracking system that would have allowed California schools to better track students' dropout rates and gather other key data.

### **EXIT EXAMS IMPACT GRADUATION RATES IN 22 STATES**

Some 43% of Cleveland high school seniors won't receive a diploma after failing parts of the Ohio exit exam, but they are not alone: With 22 states now requiring exit exams, many other seniors are in the same position.

### **EMERGING TREND: ONLINE LEARNING COMMUNITIES CHANGING**

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** Teacher professional development is undergoing a radical change for the better, thanks to the development of new online professional "learning communities" that give educators the chance to network and exchange ideas with their peers at their own convenience.

Members of these online communities also have "just in time" access to instructional tools such as videos, tutorials, and other advice whenever they need it. <http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/showstoryts.cfm?ArticleID=7165>

### **EMERGING TREND: HIGH SCHOOL GRADS COME WITH GUARANTEE**

At Lakewood High School in Ohio, graduates are leaving high school with more than a diploma; they are leaving with a guarantee. The District is assuring universities and employers that it stands behind its students' academic skills. If students feel they are lacking in any area academically, they can come back to the District for help; the guarantee lasts for two years. According to the Superintendent, the guarantee shows that we believe our graduates are "ready for college and the workplace."

<http://wmtw.com/education/13469320/detail.html>

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/19035747>

### **EMERGING TREND: ENDOWMENTS HELP PK-12 SCHOOLS FUND SPECIAL PROGRAMS**

Colleges and universities have long used endowments to pay for special programs. Now, more and more school districts are turning to the special savings accounts that allow earnings to be spent without touching the principal to pay for projects that cannot be funded through general operating funds. The principal for endowments comes from fundraising, grants, and donations.

Endowments are frequently overseen by nonprofit foundations connected to the school district, but not always. For instance, the Community Foundation of Lorain County in Ohio manages \$10 million in endowment funds for the county's 15 school districts. School districts are creative in obtaining endowment funds. For instance, some allow employees to donate to the funds. Others conduct socials and/or membership campaigns to elicit the support of the community and area businesses. The earnings are usually distributed through grants to local teachers or schools.

<http://www.cleveland.com/education/plaindealer/index.ssf?/base/isedu/1181215846210380.xml&coll=2>

## **NINE CIVIL RIGHTS GROUPS BEGIN CAMPAIGN FOR HS EQUITY: A PLAN FOR SUCCESS**

Preparing every student for graduation, college, work, and life.

Every school year, about 1.2 million students drop out of our nation's high schools, leaving almost one of every three freshmen without a high school degree four years later. While roughly 70 percent of all high school students graduate on time, African American, Hispanic, and American Indian and Alaska Native students have only a 58 percent or less chance of graduating from high school with a regular diploma. In addition - and contrary to the model minority myth - many Asian Americans also face barriers in education.

The Campaign for High School Equity's inaugural publication, *A Plan for Success: Communities of Color Define Policy Priorities for High School Reform*, makes a compelling case for the need to invest in high schools and provides a blueprint for meaningful reform. Its recommendations include a call to:

- \* Make all students proficient and prepared for college and work;
- \* Hold high schools accountable for student success;
- \* Redesign the American high school;
- \* Provide students with the excellent leaders and teachers they need to succeed;
- \* Invest communities in student success;
- \* Provide equitable learning conditions for all students

<http://www.highschoolequity.org>

## **FIVE STATES SEEK TO DISCOVER IF U.S. STUDENTS CAN COMPETE GLOBALLY**

Five states - Maine, North Carolina, South Dakota, West Virginia, and Wisconsin - are participating in a study that they hope will help answer a question growing in many American's minds: How will American kids compete in the global economy? The Partnership for 21st Century Skills also includes 31 businesses, foundations and educational associations and is a "leading advocacy organization focused on infusing 21st century skills into education."

There are six elements included in the framework for a 21st century education:

1. Core subjects (math, English, language arts, science, foreign languages, civics, government, economics, arts, history, and geography)
2. 21st century content (global awareness, financial literacy, civic literacy, and healthy and wellness awareness)
3. Learning and thinking skills (critical thinking and problem-solving skills, communication skills, creativity and innovation skills, collaboration skills, information and media literacy skills, contextual learning skills)
4. Information and communications technology literacy
5. Life skills
6. 21st century assessments that measure the other five elements.

[http://www.boston.com/news/education/k\\_12/articles/2007/06/04/states\\_study\\_competitive\\_class\\_skills/](http://www.boston.com/news/education/k_12/articles/2007/06/04/states_study_competitive_class_skills/)

## **BUDGET, BUREAUCRACY AND THE CHALLENGES SCHOOL DISTRICTS FACE**

The Wall Street Journal ran an interesting commentary by Naomi Schaefer Riley about some of the challenges school districts face, mainly because of their unique bureaucracy. Thirty-one year old Barak Ben-Gal just left the Oakland (CA) school district. He resigned as the district's budget director where he oversaw an \$850 million budget and \$150 million in construction projects. When he came to the district, a product of the Broad Residency in Urban Education, he took a 50% pay cut. He is credited with pulling the district out of bankruptcy and bringing in substantial foundation support.

The frustrations that caused Ben-Gal to leave the district are important for all of us to understand:

Budget. Schools were unable to transfer surplus funds in one area to another where they were desperately needed. For instance, if a school had money left in its textbook account, it could not move those monies to help pay for a needed security officer. In addition, the state budget process meant that schools often did not even know what discretionary funds would be available until midyear.

Communication. Because of a collective bargaining agreement that gives every teacher with a contract the right to work somewhere, regardless of how effective that teacher is, principals waited until right before school begins to tell the district that they had positions to fill. The hope was that the teachers no one wanted would already be assigned elsewhere.

Promotions. Seniority rather than expertise was the reason for promotions. Many employees held positions that they were not qualified to undertake. And, professional development activities did little to help overcome their deficiencies.

School boards. In the corporate world, boards are charged with overseeing the "big picture." Board meetings are held behind closed doors. School boards, on the other hand, are required to hold open meetings and must vote on every contract, no matter how small. Waiting on board meetings holds up operations and can cause ineffectual micromanaging.

Outsiders. The effort to "attract and draw more talent into the sector was not well received." There was a general feeling of under-utilization and the lack of professional mentorship was frustrating.

<http://www.opinionjournal.com/taste/?id=110010241>

## **NCLB SEEN AS CURBING LOW, HIGH ACHIEVERS' GAINS**

A new study of Chicago students suggests that the federal No Child Left Behind Act may indeed be leaving behind students at the far ends of the academic ability spectrum—the least able students and those who are gifted. The study by University of Chicago economists Derek A. Neal and Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach lends some empirical support to the common perception that schools are focusing on students in the middle—the so-

called "bubble kids"—in order to boost scores on the state exams used to determine whether schools are meeting their proficiency targets.

"The whole point is that the details of how you calculate 'adequate yearly progress' matter for how teachers will allocate their effort across students," said Mr. Neal, who presented his paper today at a conference hosted by the American Enterprise Institute, a think tank based here. "Anytime you keep score by looking at the number of kids who pass some proficiency standard, that will shape whom teachers teach."

### **TEACHERS SHARE SUMMER READING ON LINE**

Web sites such as PaperBackSwap, BookMooch, FrugalReader and ZunaFish are saving teachers money as they swap books with other members for usually nothing more than the cost of postage. The sites allow members to list books they no longer want and use credits to request other members' listings.

### **ARTICLE: BUILDING SMART EDUCATION SYSTEMS**

There is a growing recognition that improving schools and school systems, while essential, is not enough. Ensuring that every child becomes proficient and beyond will require the support and active engagement of organizations and agencies outside of schools as well. The role of out-of-school factors in educational success has sparked heated debate. But the debate over whether in-school or out-of-school factors are more salient in children's learning -- a debate that has raged at least since the 1966 publication of James S. Coleman's Equality of Educational Opportunity -- is in many respects a false one.

Both factors are important, and both must be addressed if the nation is to fulfill its 60-year-old promise of equal educational opportunity, and its more recent pledge to ensure that all children learn to high levels. The experiences of middle-class and affluent children make this proposition clear. To be sure, relatively affluent students tend to have schooling advantages that support higher levels of learning. Numerous studies have documented the disparities in school facilities, teacher quality, and curriculum offerings that favor more-advantaged students. Less well known, however, are the numer-

ous out-of-school advantages that middle-class and affluent students are more likely than poorer students to have access to. From museum visits to club memberships to internships in professional offices, relatively affluent students routinely take part in activities that enhance their learning and widen the in-school disparities. If we are serious about ensuring that all children learn to high levels -- writes Robert Rothman in Education Week -- we need to address both the inequities within schools and those outside of schools. <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2007/08/01/44rothman.h26.html>

### **ARTICLE: THREE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT MISTAKES (AND HOW TO AVOID THEM)**

Despite having well-intentioned, thoughtful improvement plans, many schools still struggle to raise student performance -- often because their improvement efforts are doomed to failure from the very start by three common, yet avoidable, mistakes. In the lead article of the latest issue of *Changing Schools*, the free magazine from McREL, a Denver-based nonprofit education research and development organization,

Ceri Dean and Bryan Goodwin assert that "*Mistake #1*" is "*treating the symptoms, not the underlying problem.*" They write that, "Everyone knows cough syrup doesn't cure you; it just treats your symptoms. But all too often, like cough syrup, school improvement plans attempt to treat the symptoms, but not the root causes of low student achievement."

*The second mistake, according to the authors, is "Focusing only on tangibles and ignoring intangibles."* School culture, teacher attitudes and beliefs, and other norms and values are at the heart of low school performance. Indeed, recent McREL research suggests that a key distinction between high- and low-performing schools is that high-performing schools work to create a "culture of high expectations."

Finally, *the authors warn against "Biting off more than you can chew."* They note that instead of focusing on one or two clearly defined efforts, many school improvement plans outline sweeping efforts with multiple goals and several action items related to each goal -- as many as 30-40 actions for a single year. "That's far too many initiatives for school faculty and staff to keep in

their heads or take seriously. As a result, usually very little happens," conclude Dean and Goodwin. The full article is available online at:

[http://www.mcrel.org/pdf/changingschools/9503NL\\_07\\_CS55\\_02\\_school\\_improvement\\_mistakes.pdf](http://www.mcrel.org/pdf/changingschools/9503NL_07_CS55_02_school_improvement_mistakes.pdf)

### **ONLINE BIBLIOGRAPHY: DISTRICTS AND EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT -- RESEARCH FROM 1988 UNTIL PRESENT**

<http://www.schoolcommunities.org/Archive/resources/bibliography.html>  
STUDY:

### **ACADEMIC STANDARDS VARY WIDELY BY STATE**

The U.S. Department of Education has released a report that measures the extent of the differences among state academic standards. Mapping 2005 State Proficiency Standards Onto the NAEP Scales presents the results of applying a methodology for mapping state proficiency standards in reading and mathematics onto the appropriate NAEP scale, employing data from the 2004-05 academic year for both grades 4 and 8. Standards vary so greatly that a fourth grader testing proficient in reading in Mississippi or Tennessee would fail the assessment in South Carolina or Massachusetts. No state, however, sets its reading proficiency levels as high as the National Assessment for Educational Progress, which is considered the gold standard of testing.

The report is likely to give ammunition to proponents of using national standards. Margaret Spellings, U.S. Education Secretary, said that the findings are sobering and show that serious work remains to be done to ensure that all children are taught to the highest possible standards. However, she said that it is not up to the federal government to set standards. That responsibility, she said, remains with each state.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/08/education/o8scores.html>

### **REPORT: STANDARDS-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY UNDER NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND - NCLB HAS CHANGED TEACHING, NOT ALWAYS FOR THE BETTER**

Educators are adjusting their teaching practices in response to NCLB, but not always in ways policymakers might want, according to a three-year

RAND study. Sizable percentages of teachers in California, Georgia and Pennsylvania say they spend more time on test-taking strategies, focus more narrowly on tested topics and tailor teaching to students just below the proficiency cutoffs. <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG589/>

### **REPORT: CONDITION OF EDUCATION 2007**

The latest report by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) on the condition of education in the United States shows that high school students are taking more courses in math, science, social studies, the arts, and foreign languages than in the past. Other findings include an increasing diversity of student population in public schools, greater numbers of students enrolling in postsecondary education, and more bachelor's degrees have been awarded than in the past.

Scores on the National Assessment for Educational Progress have remained virtually flat for high school students for nearly 40 years, indicating that more students are not only taking the challenging courses, but also achieving at higher levels. On the other hand, 33% of the nation's high schools do not even offer advanced placement courses and minorities are only half as likely as white students to enroll in the courses that are available.

<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/press/index.asp>

### **REPORT: ALIGNED EXPECTATIONS? A CLOSER LOOK AT COLLEGE ADMISSIONS AND PLACEMENT TESTS**

Some states seeking to raise high school standards have begun using college placement tests as high school exit exams. This study from Achieve compares tests, including the ACT and SAT, against the American Diploma Project's benchmarks to inform policymakers' decisions about if, and how, these tests should be incorporated in state K-12 assessment and accountability systems. <http://www.achieve.org/node/336>

### **REPORT: A VOICE FROM THE MIDDLE**

This national survey of middle school students reveals some stark contrasts between students' educational aspirations & their understanding of how to achieve them. Ninety two percent of students indicated that they were likely to attend college, but 68% indicated that they had little or no infor-

mation about how to choose college-preparatory courses. While 93% indicated they would NOT drop out of high school, 83% knew little or nothing about the courses they needed to graduate.

[http://www.principals.org/s\\_nassp/sec.asp?CID=1140&DID=55624](http://www.principals.org/s_nassp/sec.asp?CID=1140&DID=55624)

### **REPORT: NOT FOR THE TIMID: BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS, CREATING BREAKTHROUGH HIGH SCHOOLS IN OHIO**

This report from the Center on Reinventing Public Education identifies legal, regulatory, and policy barriers to redesigning Ohio's high schools —& finds that some of the most critical barriers are rooted in people's differing philosophies, lack of funding & difficulties in reallocating existing resources, & Ohio's strong tradition of local control of public education.

[http://www.edpartner.org/pdfs/not\\_for\\_the\\_timid.pdf](http://www.edpartner.org/pdfs/not_for_the_timid.pdf)

### **REPORT: BOOSTERS, BROKERS AND BRIDGES: REAL WORLD IDEAS FOR COLLEGE ACCESS PROJECTS**

This report includes lessons and ideas on college access program operations, service strategies, and service-delivery models from the "real world" experiences of Lumina Foundation for Education's McCabe Fund. The programs described are grouped into three types: (1) Boosters are programs that provide encouragement and build belief in college possibilities; (2) Brokers provide or facilitate access to service resources; and (3) Bridges link secondary and postsecondary education

<http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/BBB/BoostersBridgesBrokersWED.pdf>

### **REPORTS: UNDERSTANDING HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES**

These state-by-state reports from the Alliance for Excellent Education examine discrepancies in high school graduation rates reported by government and independent sources and explain why these differences are important. While the average difference between data sources is about 13%, the gap ranges from a low of 4% to a high of 32%.

<http://www.all4ed.org/publications/WhosCounting/index.html>

[http://www.all4ed.org/publications/wcwc/National\\_wc.pdf](http://www.all4ed.org/publications/wcwc/National_wc.pdf)

### **REPORT: ACADEMIC INTERVENTIONS TO HELP STUDENTS MEET RIGOROUS STANDARDS: STATE POLICY OPTIONS**

In this report, the National High School Alliance highlights five categories of academic interventions for at-risk students: (1) Accelerated instruction; (2) Extended learning time; (3) Personalized learning environments; (4) Dropout prevention and recovery programs; and (5) Incorporating literacy instruction into the curriculum. The report examines the existing evaluation research for each category of intervention and discusses the range of policy options for designing state-level intervention programs.

<http://www.hsalliance.org/downloads/NNCO/AcademicInterventionsFinal.pdf>

### **POLICY BRIEF: STATE AND DISTRICT-LEVEL SUPPORT FOR SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS INTO HIGH SCHOOL**

This policy brief examines how some states and districts are currently easing the transition into high school for students.

<http://www.betterhighschools.org>

### **POLICY BRIEF: ACCOUNTABILITY**

<http://www.forumforeducation.org/forumination/index.php?page=373>

### **POLICY REPORT: STANDARDS, ASSESSMENTS AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY: IN PURSUIT OF GENUINE ACCOUNTABILITY** - Linda

Darling-Hammond

<http://www.forumforeducation.org/resources/index.php?item=149&page=32>

### **REPORT: TOWARD ENSURING A SMOOTH TRANSITION INTO HIGH SCHOOL**

This report highlights best practices found in research into high school transition strategies. <http://www.betterhighschools.org>

### **SNAPSHOT: MANAGING THE TRANSITION TO NINTH GRADE IN A COMPREHENSIVE URBAN HIGH SCHOOL**

This snapshot illustrates how one school is managing to make a positive difference for ninth graders. <http://www.betterhighschools.org>

### **QUICK STATS FACT SHEET: THE FIRST YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL**

This fact sheet highlights statistics related to the transition into high school for U.S. students. <http://www.betterhighschools.org>

## **RESEARCH BRIEF: FINDINGS FROM THE EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL INITIATIVE: A LOOK AT BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED REGARDING A DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAM**

This research brief on the Early College High School Initiative (ECHSI), a dual enrollment program developed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, examines lessons learned and best practices gleaned from an evaluation specific to the ECHSI, "Early College High School Initiative 2003-2005 Evaluation Report." These findings help inform those interested in developing or implementing dual enrollment programs as a strategy to accelerate learning and help bridge transitions after graduation.

<http://www.betterhighschools.org>

## **IMPROVING READING/WRITING in AMERICA'S MIDDLE/HIGH**

**SCHOOLS** According to the Alliance for Excellent Education, research on the importance of, and strategies for, improving literacy among the nation's secondary school students has reached a level of compelling consensus that confidently justifies changes in federal policy. The Alliance's new policy brief, "Federal Support for Adolescent Literacy: A Solid Investment," notes that the federal investment in developing high-level reading and writing skills in younger students has diminishing returns unless literacy instruction is continued throughout the K-12 educational continuum.

The brief argues for support and expansion of federal programs such as the Striving Readers Act, which could provide high-quality reading and writing instruction for millions of students in grades 4-12, but which currently operates in only eight districts across the nation. The Alliance's new brief lays out a set of strategic policy recommendations that include: (1) Encourage schools, districts, and states to articulate clear, comprehensive, actionable plans for improving literacy instruction; (2) Invest in tools that help schools identify struggling readers and appropriately adjust instruction in grades 4-12; (3) Invest in ongoing professional development programs designed to help all middle and high school teachers provide effective reading and writing instruction in their subject area; (4) Support and invest in accountability systems that give teachers strong incentives to provide effective reading and writing instruction; and, (5) Invest in ongoing research on and evaluation of

strategies to improve adolescent literacy.

<http://www.all4ed.org/publications/FedAdLit.pdf>

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM LEAP THE GAP YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT** (Ann Arbor, Michigan)

The Leap the Gap Youth Empowerment Project issued 22 recommendations for action for combating the achievement gap at a recent Ann Arbor (Michigan) school board meeting. Several of the recommendations include:

- \* Create advisory forums at all high schools.
- \* Decentralize and personalize large schools into smaller learning communities.
- \* Update professional development to increase use of diverse teaching methods in support of diverse learning styles and a counseling model to interface with the new system of advisory forums.
- \* Fully inform and significantly involve students in their own education choices. Invest in low-cost information and equitable access to school and community information, opportunities and support resources for students and parents, including contemporary technology and library resources and money for school expenses such as supplies, transportation and activities that otherwise are more accessible to the economically privileged.
- \* With student leadership, simplify, strengthen and enforce policies for structure and firm standards (skipping class and tardiness policies, cheating, suspension criteria, etc.)
- \* Restructure student school days to free more time for jobs and participation in other real-life community opportunities.
- \* Provide more accessibility to and subsidy for public transportation, including additional routes and passes for students with limited means.

## **OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT**

In anticipation of the September premiere of Ken Burns' "The War," the Library of Congress, PBS and WETA public television in Washington, D.C. have launched a nationwide educational outreach program that will give World War II veterans the opportunity to tell their own stories in their own words. PBS and the Library of Congress are encouraging your high school students to take part in this process by interviewing veterans in your community.

"The War" tells the story of World War II through the eyes of a handful of men and women in four American towns. The Veterans History Project will allow thousands more to share their stories. The Library of Congress originally launched the Project in 2000 to collect the oral histories of veterans from all U.S. wars and already has more than 45,000 stories on file. "We hope that this film will build interest in the broader, important work of the Veterans History Project and encourage thousands of people from coast to coast to share their stories with friends, loved ones and ultimately, the country through the collection at the Library of Congress," said Paula Kerger, president and chief executive officer of PBS. In addition to information about participating in the Veterans History Project, high school teachers will receive supplemental educational materials for "The War" in the mail this September.

For more information on "The War" and how to participate in the Veterans History Project, go to <http://www.pbs.org/thewar/>

## **SOME FUNDING AND AWARD OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Sun Microsystems Foundation Open Gateway Grants Program**

The Sun Microsystems Foundation Open Gateway Grants Program provides hardware and software grants, training, and technical support to: assist schools, particularly in economically disadvantaged communities, in making the transition to network computing; assists schools in utilizing network-based tools to network computing; assists schools in utilizing network-based tools to implement new teaching strategies that improve instruction and student outcomes; and promotes the full integration of technology into curriculum to help ensure that students are prepared to become information workers of tomorrow.

[http://www.sun.com/aboutsun/comm\\_invest/ogp/index.html](http://www.sun.com/aboutsun/comm_invest/ogp/index.html) for more info,  
email: [corpaffrs@corp.sun.com](mailto:corpaffrs@corp.sun.com)

650.336.0787

Sun Microsystems, Inc., Corporate Affairs Department, 901 San Antonio Road, M/S UPALO1-462, Palo Alto, CA 94303

### **Toyota USA Foundation**

Committed to improving K-12 education, The Toyota USA Foundation offers grants to nonprofit organizations for projects which increase the productivity of students and/or educators primarily in the areas of math and science. Applications are reviewed continually (no deadline).

<http://www.toyota.com/about/community/tusafoundation/index.html>

For additional info, 310.618.6766

Foundation Administrator, Toyota USA Foundation, A404, 19001 S. Western Avenue, Torrance, CA 90509

### **Verizon Foundation**

Verizon Foundation supports projects by nonprofit organizations that focus on education, literacy, domestic violence prevention, or technology for healthcare and healthcare accessibility. Award amounts vary; average amounts are \$5,000-\$10,000. Eligible applicants are public or private elementary and secondary schools that are registered with the National Center for Education Statistics or eligible tax-exempt organizations in certain 501(c)(3) subsections as defined by the Internal Revenue Service. Deadline: November 30, 2007

<http://foundation.verizon.com>

### **Walt Disney Minnie Grants**

The Walt Disney Company and Youth Service America are pleased to announce grants of up to \$500 to support youth-led service projects. These grants support youth (ages 5-14) in planning and implementing service projects in their community. Teachers, older youth (15-25), youth-leaders, and youth-serving organizations are also eligible to apply, provided that they that engage younger youth (5-14) in planning and implementing the service. Service can take place between October 1 and November 26, 2007. Projects can address themes such as the environment, disaster relief, public health and awareness, community education, hunger, literacy, or any issue that youth identify as a community need.

Questions? Email MinnieGrant (at) ysa.org.

Receipt deadline: August 30, 2007.

<http://ysa.org/AwardsGrants/tabid/58/Default.aspx> TIME SENSITIVE!!!

### **YouthPower Service Grants**

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and Youth Service America (YSA) are pleased to announce YouthPower grants of up to \$1,000 to support youth-led service projects. These grants support youth in foster care (ages 5-18) and youth who have recently transitioned out of foster care (ages 19-25) in planning and implementing service projects in their community. Youth-serving organizations that have prior experience in working with youth in the foster care system are eligible to apply, provided that they that engage foster youth in planning and implementing a service project. Service projects will take place as part of Global Youth Service Day on April 25-27, 2008.

Projects can address themes such as the environment, disaster relief, public health and awareness, community education, hunger, literacy, or any issue that youth identify as a community need. Applications are welcome from organizations in the US only.

Questions? Email YouthPower at [ysa.org](mailto:ysa.org)

Receipt deadline: October 1, 2007.

<http://ysa.org/AwardsGrants/tabid/58/Default.aspx>

### **Best Buy Grants**

Apply for a grant from Best Buy's Teach Awards program designed to "recognize creative use of interactive technology to learn standards-based curriculum in K-12 classrooms."

Award amounts are: \$2,000 in Best Buy Gift Cards to 1,500 programs; \$10,000 to 50 schools; and \$100,000 to 8 school districts. Eligible applicants are certified teachers, specialists, and/or principals who have been at their school for at least one full academic year accredited non-profit K-12 public, private, parochial, magnet, and charter schools within 50 miles of a Best Buy store verified by the Best Buy Store Locator. **Deadline: September 30, 2007**

<http://bestbuyteach.scholarshipamerica.org/>

**Donors Choose - DonorsChoose.org**

Grades 0 to 12 Have you ever wished that you could apply for a grant for a simple (or not so simple) classroom project, but found you had nowhere to turn? This organization provides a means for teachers to write a proposal and allows donors to find them and provide funding, even in small amounts, toward the teacher's project.

The organization allows donors to fund all or part of a project and to fund the "fulfillment," i.e. the administrative costs the organization has in staffing, providing web space, etc. Not all regions of the U.S. are part of this service, but they are expanding. <http://www.donorschoose.org>

### **NEA Foundation Student Achievement Grants**

This is an ongoing grant opportunity for teachers. Public school teachers or support professionals Pre-K-12, and faculty or staff of public colleges or universities are eligible. Grants of \$5000 will be awarded to "improve the academic achievement of students in U.S. public schools and public higher education institutions in any subject area(s). The proposed work should engage students in critical thinking and problem solving that deepen their knowledge of standards-based subject matter. The work should also improve students' habits of inquiry, self-directed learning, and critical reflection." See their site for more information. In the Classroom: Deadline: Ongoing, three times per year

<http://www.neafoundation.org>

### **Lowe's Toolbox for Education**

Lowe's Toolbox for Education projects should encourage family involvement and build stronger community spirits.

Any individual non-profit public K-12 school or parent group (associated with a non-profit public K-12 school) that has a group tax ID # and official 501c(3) status from the IRS is eligible to apply.

Grant awards will range from \$2,000 to \$5,000.

Deadline for Fall 2007-2008 cycle: October 12, 2007.

<http://www.toolboxforeducation.com/>

### **Expo's Classroom Makeover Contest**

Win a \$25,000 classroom makeover to be used to improve your classroom! Submit an essay of no more than 100 words and classroom photograph describing why your classroom needs a makeover.

The Contest is open only to K-12 teachers employed by a state accredited educational institution (public or private) located in the 50 United States or D.C. who are legal residents of the 50 United States or D.C. Only one entry per person will be accepted.

The grand prize winner will receive a \$25,000 makeover. Four first prize winners will receive a \$5,000 classroom makeover.

Entries must be made by 11:59 PM on October 15,  
<http://www.expoclassroommakeover.com/>

### **Staples Foundation Grants**

The mission of Staples Foundation for Learning is to provide funding to programs that support or provide job skills and/or education for all people, with a special emphasis on disadvantaged youth.

Eligibility:

The applicant organization must:

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Have a nonprofit tax-exempt classification under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

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Align with Staples Foundation for Learning's mission and give focus on job skills and education.

<http://www.staplesfoundation.org>

### **Office Depot Grants Fund Projects Making Creative Use of Common Teaching Aids**

Office Depot/SHOPA 2006 Kids In Need Teacher Grants are available to fund projects that make creative use of common teaching aids, approach curriculum from an imaginative angle, or tie nontraditional concepts together for the purpose of illustrating commonalities. Innovation and merit account for 40 percent of the evaluation. Maximum Award: \$500.

Eligibility: K-12 teachers. Deadline: September 30, 2007.

<http://www.kidsinneed.net/grants/guidelines.php>

### **General Mills Grants Lend a Hand to Public Schools**

General Mills is looking to lend a helping hand to neighborhoods nationwide with its "My Hometown Helper" grant program. Individuals from communities and organizations across America can submit a written essay of 250 words or less describing how the "My Hometown Helper" grant would help improve their community project. Maximum Award: \$15,000.

Eligibility: Requests for funding must be sponsored by a municipal or civic organization or public school. Deadline: September 30, 2007.

<http://www.myhometownhelper.com/>

### **"American School Board Journal Awards to School Districts**

American School Board Journal (ASBJ) is accepting nominations online for the 2008 Magna Awards through October 1, 2007. Presented in cooperation with Sodexo School Services, winners of the Magna Awards receive national recognition in a special supplement to ASBJ and are honored at a luncheon at the National School Boards Association's annual conference. Awards are handed out in three enrollment categories -- under 5,000, 5,001 to 20,000, and more than 20,000. Grand prize winners in each category receive a \$3,500 cash award from Sodexo. Nominations this year are being accepted only online. For more information, call (703) 838-6739.

<http://www.asbj.com/magna/>

### **Outstanding Young Educator Award**

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development is seeking nominations for its Outstanding Young Educator Award, which recognizes a teacher under the age of 40 who demonstrates excellence in his or her profession, a positive impact on students, creativity in the classroom, and leadership in his or her school or district. Maximum Award: \$10,000. Eligibility: K-12 teachers under age 40; no self-nominations accepted. Deadline: October 15, 2007.

[http://servicelearning.org/resources/funding\\_sources/index.php?popup\\_id=242](http://servicelearning.org/resources/funding_sources/index.php?popup_id=242)