

CASN News *February 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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community by simply sending your email to CASN_News@yahoogroups.com. To contact the CASN News editor, please email gaia_pc@yahoo.com OR patricia510@gmail.com

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"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change." - Charles Darwin

"There is an African proverb that we return to time and again in our work: 'If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.'

No single issue is more important to our children's future-or our nation's future-than education, and there is no way to meet the challenge that lies before us if we don't work together to solve it.

Every student in America should graduate from high school ready for life. Every student. No exceptions. Yet, in our schools today, 70 percent of eighth graders are not proficient in reading, and most of them will never catch up. Every year, 1.1 million young people drop out of high school. Another 1 million graduate unprepared for college or for a career....."

- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

SUPREME COURT WATCH

The tenor of questioning during recent Supreme Court oral arguments suggests justices likely will find Louisville, Kentucky and Seattle, Washington school districts' school-assignment policies unconstitutional.

A majority of justices didn't appear to accept defendants' contention that the benefits of a diverse school system warrant limiting an

individual's right to equal protection.

PRESIDENT BUSH'S EDUCATION AGENDA

In his State of the Union Address, President Bush's main comments on education totaled about one and a half minutes of his 50-minute address.

In that short time, President Bush conveyed his desire for the No Child Left Behind Act to be reauthorized this year. He also reinforced his support for high standards, school choice, increased funding for struggling students, a focus on math & science to ensure the nation's competitiveness, & increased measures to turn around failing schools. Although information about each of these priorities was limited in the State of the Union, the Administration went into greater detail in the Blueprint for Strengthening NCLB. Among those priorities:

- . **Transparency among state assessments.** The President supports requiring states to include both the state assessment and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) on the same public report card.
- . **Improved assessment of student progress through growth models.** The President supports allowing states with well-established assessments & robust data systems to use growth models in their overall accountability systems.
- . **Increased tutoring and school choice options.** The President proposes multiple means to enable low-income students to transfer to private schools or out-of-district public schools, or receive intensive tutoring.
- . **Targeted resources to help struggling schools improve.** The President supports the use of School Improvement Grants to support the implementation of schools' restructuring plans & help states closely monitor & review those plans & provide technical assistance.
- . **New resources to help high schools.** The President supports increasing Title I funding for high schools. Districts will be required to give their high schools at least 90 percent of the high schools' proportionate share of the new funds. A corresponding funding increase will ensure that elementary schools' Title I programs are not negatively funded.
- . **Focus on the American Competitiveness Initiative.** The President proposes incorporating the education-related aspects of the American Competitiveness Initiative into NCLB. This initiative seeks to ensure students are prepared for success in the competitive global economy; it focuses primarily on math and science by providing resources to help teachers use scientifically proven practices, increasing academic rigor, training

more teachers, and encouraging talented professionals to share their expertise in the classroom. The President also proposes that the reauthorized version of NCLB require students to demonstrate proficiency in science by 2019-20.

In 2006, the proposed budget included \$380 million for this plan. (sources: ASCD, U.S. Education Department)

PRESIDENT'S FY 2008 BUDGET COULD HAVE A HUGE IMPACT ON HIGH SCHOOLS

Shortly after releasing a proposal to reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), President Bush submitted his FY 2008 budget to Congress. Although the administration plans to target more funding toward high schools, the budget proposes to eliminate 43 programs and makes significant cuts to the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act (Perkins) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

The president would provide \$13.9 billion for Title I grants to local educational agencies. This represents a \$1.2 billion increase over the FY 2006 level but only a \$1.1 billion increase over the FY 2007 level approved by the U.S. House of Representatives last week. Nearly 90% of the \$1.2 billion would be targeted for high schools. According to budget documents, the administration "believes that ensuring that high schools receive their fair share of Title I resources will help extend those achievement gains to the high school level and contribute to the preparation of all high school students for postsecondary education or competitive employment in the global economy."

The supplemental Title I funding would also support new assessments in reading and math in two additional high school years, including an assessment of college readiness in each subject during 11th grade. Finally, the proposal calls on high schools to improve their graduation rates as a condition of making adequate yearly progress.

"It's always good to see additional funding for high schools," said National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Executive Director Gerald N. Tirozzi, "but we are concerned that the president is only rearranging money that already exists in the budget." Tirozzi voiced his opposition to expanding NCLB testing requirements into high school, arguing that the Title I funds

should be spent on remedial services, in-house tutoring, & literacy coaches for the nearly 8 million students reading below grade level. "The \$1.2 billion is just a drop in the bucket to what our high schools really need," he said.

NASSP is pleased that the budget would increase funding for a number of programs specifically aimed at increasing academic achievement for middle level & high school students. They include:

- . \$122.2 million for Advanced Placement courses (+\$90 million)
- . \$411.6 million for State Assessment Grants (+\$4.6 million)
- . \$100 million for the Striving Readers (+\$70.3 million)
- . \$199 million for the Teacher Incentive Fund (+\$100 million).

The administration also proposes \$125 million for a new Math Now for Middle School Students program. Modeled after Striving Readers, this program would improve the quality of math instruction for middle level students whose achievement is significantly below grade level.

Unfortunately, with the good comes the bad. IDEA would receive \$11.5 billion in FY 2008, nearly \$300 million less than in FY 2007. Of that amount, \$10.5 billion would be allocated for IDEA Part B state grants to offset district costs for special education programs. Perkins funding would be cut by nearly 50% to \$617.4 million in FY 2007, a surprise, considering the program has been zeroed out by the Bush administration in the past.

Other programs that were cut or level-funded include:

- . \$981.2 million for 21st Century Community Learning Centers (level funding)
- . \$182.1 million for Math and Science Partnerships (-\$100,000)
- . \$168.9 million for Rural Education (level funding)
- . \$324.2 million for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program (-\$22.3 million)
- . \$2.79 billion for Teacher Quality State Grants (-\$100 million).

And the following programs were once again targeted for elimination:

- . Civic Education
- . Comprehensive School Reform
- . Dropout Prevention
- . Elementary and Secondary School Counseling

- . School Leadership
- . Smaller Learning Communities
- . Tech Prep Education State Grants

One consideration is that the President's budget is pretty much "dead on arrival" because congressional Democrats control education funding now and many are outspoken in their disappointment with the president's proposals. "This budget stops the downward slide in No Child Left Behind funding that has happened over the last two years, but much more must be done to provide schools with the resources they need to successfully carry out the law, said Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chair of the House Education and Labor Committee. Calling the budget cuts "reprehensible," he said, "For too long, the president has failed students, teachers, and parents, who are holding up to their end of the bargain. It's too bad the president isn't holding up to his."

DEMOCRATS OUTLINE EDUCATION PRIORITIES

Congressional Democrats have announced that when Congress reconvenes in January, their education priorities will include lowering interest rates on college loans, boosting Pell grants, and reauthorizing the No Child Left Behind Act with more federal dollars.

SENATE PROVIDES \$1.17 BILLION INCREASE FOR EDUCATION

Last week, the Senate passed a \$463.5 billion spending measure which will fund the government for the rest of fiscal year 2007, ending on September 30. H J. RES. 20 cleared the Senate by a vote of 81-15. The previous continuing resolution expired on Feb. 15.

The FY07 funding resolution will provide an increase for education of \$1.17 billion more than the FY06 levels. The increases include:

- . A \$250 million increase in Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), including a \$125 million increase for Title I grants to school districts.
- . A \$200 million increase for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), state grants.
- . A \$104 million increase in Head Start.
- . A \$615.4 million increase for Pell Grants to raise the maximum Pell Grant by \$260 to \$4,310.

NOTE: If you wish to learn how your Senators voted on this resolution, you can visit Senate.gov. If they voted yes, you might consider sending a thank you email. (*Things our mothers taught us:*

An important aspect of advocacy is to always say "thank you" when you obtain your desired result/s.)

MORE SCHOOLS AWARDING GOOD ATTENDANCE

Public schools commonly reward excellent attendance with movie tickets, gasoline vouchers, or iPods. But some diligent students are hitting the ultimate teenage jackpot for going to school: They have won cars or trucks. In most cases, the vehicle is donated by a local dealership, and the prizes typically are awarded through drawings open only to students with good attendance.

CONNECTING AMERICAN EDUCATION FROM BIRTH TO ADULTHOOD

A child born in Virginia is significantly more likely to experience success throughout life than the average child born in the United States, while a child born in New Mexico is likely to face an accumulating series of hurdles both educationally and economically, according to an analysis published by Education Week. The analysis by the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center is based on the "Chance-for-Success Index," which tracks state efforts to connect education from preschool through postsecondary education and provides a perspective on the importance of education throughout a person's lifetime. The index is based on 13 indicators that highlight whether young children get off to a good start, succeed in elementary and secondary school, and hit key educational and income benchmarks as adults. Virginia, Connecticut, Minnesota, New Jersey, Maryland, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire rank at the

top of the index, while Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Texas, Arizona, Louisiana, and New Mexico lag significantly behind the national average in descending order.

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2007/01/04/index.html>

KENTUCKY PROGRAM TARGETS SECONDARY LITERACY

A five-year, federally funded program called the "Kentucky Content Literacy Consortium" is aiming to boost literacy in 21 middle & high schools, which have traditionally been overlooked by literacy programs targeting elementary schools.

<http://www.courier-journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061226/NEWS01/612260369>

FLORIDA RELEASES LIST OF HS MAJORS

The Florida Department of Education recently released a list of 440 approved high school majors that students will begin to choose in this coming school year. Most high schools, however, will only offer a small fraction of the approved majors as choices for incoming eighth graders.

<http://www.heraldtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061212/NEWS/612120367>

MICHIGAN IN THE FAST LANE OF HIGH SCHOOL REFORM

<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1568853,00.html>

MORE STUDENTS TAKE, PASS A.P. EXAMS

Around 15% of public high school graduates received a score of three or above on an Advanced Placement exam in 2006, an increase over the 10% who passed AP tests in 2000, according to a new report. (Source: USA Today)

http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/life/20070207/bl_bottoms_trip07.art.htm

MIDDLE SCHOOL OFFERS AP PREP PLUS HS CREDIT

A program at Central Middle School in Columbia Heights, Minnesota, offers students the chance to take courses to prepare them for advanced placement work at the high school level. As a bonus, students who successfully complete the classes earn high school credits.

<http://www.startribune.com/142/story/982156.html> (may require free registration)

TEXAS LAW HELPS IB PROGRAM GROW

Texas law says students who take International Baccalaureate coursework in high school must receive at least 24 semester credit hours if they attend an in-state public college. About 40 public schools statewide are in the program, and teachers say the law is strengthening its appeal.

TEXAS STRUGGLES WITH HIGH HS DROPOUT RATE

As many as one out of three Texas students never graduates -- and more Texas students drop out than finish high school in the state's largest cities.

Those are the findings from several researchers, including the San Antonio-based Intercultural Development Research Association and the Center for Education at Rice University.More than 2.5 million students have dropped out of Texas hss in the last 20 years. ...The statewide dropout rate is approximately 33 percent -- or 20 points higher than what the Texas Education Agency reports.

IN MASSACHUSETTS, NEARLY HALF HISPANIC STUDENTS FAIL TO GRADUATE HS

The latest figures on the number of Massachusetts high school students who graduate in four years or less show a wide racial disparity.

Overall, 80 percent of freshmen in 2002 graduated in four years or less.

Of those who didn't, six percent remained in school while 12 percent dropped out.

But nearly half of Hispanic high school freshmen and more than a third of black, urban and low income freshmen in 2002 failed to graduate four years later. That's according to new data released by the state Department of Education.

The state's overall graduation rate was higher than the national average, estimated at about 70 percent.

FLORIDA HS STUDENTS MUST PASS WRITING TEST TO GRADUATE

Florida's Board of Education has voted to require high school seniors, starting with the current freshmen class, to pass the writing portion of the FCAT exam to graduate. (source: Miami Herald)

D.C. SCHOOLS WIN \$4.8 MILLION DOLLAR GRANT FROM GATES FOUNDATION

D.C. School Superintendent Clifford B. Janey announced the district plans to use a new \$4.8 million Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation grant to expand remedial help in low-performing schools, boost teacher training and create career academies at several high school campuses.

OHIO PASSES TOUGHER GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

The Ohio state legislature recently passed tougher high school graduation requirements, including four years of math and English, and three years of a lab-based science. Students would need to take these courses in order to be considered for admission at any of Ohio's public four-year universities.

<http://news.enquirer.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061221/NEWS0102/612210351>

NORTH CAROLINA CONSIDERS COLLEGE PREP CURRICULUM FOR ALL

A proposal being considered by the North Carolina Board of Education would require all high school students to complete a curriculum approved for admission to the state's four-year colleges and universities. The proposal would affect students beginning with the class of 2012.

VIRGINIA COUNTY CONSIDERS MAGNET SCHOOLS

School leaders in Prince William County, Virginia, are considering creating a magnet program to compete with those in neighboring counties. Officials, parents and students in Northern Virginia say there is growing demand for magnet schools in which subjects such as science and math receive extra focus. (source: Washington Post. NOTE: Washington Post may require free registration to access articles.) <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/28/AR2006122801437.html>

LOUISIANA SCHOOLS GET GRANTS TO FIGHT DROPOUTS

The state of Louisiana will give up to 50 schools grants of \$100,000 to lower their dropout rates through reforms to the eighth and ninth grades. Reforms could include sessions before school to improve study skills, special instruction for students with problems in math and reading, literacy training in all subjects and more rigorous ninth-grade courses.

ALASKA NATIVE CHARTER SCHOOL APPROVED

The Anchorage Public Schools Board of Education recently approved

the creation of an Alaska native charter school. The Alaska native community says that high dropout rates and low test scores among students in the community are proof that the learning style and culture of public schools is not working for native students.

VIRGINIA SCHOOL STRUGGLES TO FIND USE FOR LAPTOPS

Students at T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, Virginia, received individual laptops two years ago, but many classes have struggled to incorporate the computers into their curricula. This year, the school has made an effort to use the laptops more effectively.

PORTLAND SCHOOLS RECEIVE SECOND LARGE GRANT FROM GATES FOUNDATION

Portland, Oregon, schools recently announced that they will receive an additional \$2.6 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The new grant will pay for consultants and the development of a new high school improvement office that will evaluate high school options for students, more deeply analyze student performance, and help students create individual graduation plans.

CA SETS UP NEW SYSTEM TO HELP TRACK HS DROPOUT RATE

Last year, the Civil Rights project of Harvard University published a study claiming 87 percent of high school students graduated statewide in 2002.

The Civil Rights project estimates the actual rate was 71 percent.

At a summit on high school dropouts held in Sacramento, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell said this school year, the state assigned each student an individual number so officials will be able to track progress without relying on estimates.

O'Connell said, "We need to have what's known as a student information system so that we can track the students as they move from one district to another if they move out of state, if they move to another country, if they come back to into California."

The numbering system was developed in response to heavy criticism that state educators under reported the percentage of high school dropouts.

MASSACHUSETTS PROMOTES COLLEGE GOING WEB SITE

The Massachusetts Department of Education and the Board of Higher Education are spending \$250,000 to promote a Web Site

intended to boost interest in college to middle and high school students. The marketing campaign includes advertisements on buses along with radio, movie theater and television ads. The Web Site, <http://www.ReadySetGotoCollege.com>, provides eight steps for getting into and being successful at college.

NASA LOOKS TO BUILD EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Looking to attract more students to careers in technical disciplines such as science, technology, mathematics, and engineering (STEM), a group of educators, policy makers, students, and officials from NASA and other government agencies convened outside Washington, D.C.,for a first-of-its-kind summit aimed at fostering sustainable educational partnerships.

The government space agency used the day-long event, called the NASA Education Partnership Summit, to lay out a new educational framework intended to help NASA work more effectively with schools, while furthering its mission of preparing today's students for success in the 21st century.

<http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/showStoryts.cfm?ArticleID=6802>

BUSINESS COMMUNITY WEIGHS IN ABOUT U.S. EDUCATION SYSTEM

A recent survey sent to members of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce found that nearly 100 percent of those surveyed agreed that a rigorous curriculum in K-12 classrooms is necessary to prepare students for college and the workplace.

UPDATE ON ADVANCED PLACEMENT (A.P.) COURSE AUDIT

According to the College Board, schools may begin submitting AP course audit materials for 2007-08. A revised timeline and guidelines are available online at

<http://www.apcentral.collegeboard.com/courseaudit>. This month instructions for submitting materials via the Web will be sent to all schools and posted on AP Central. The goal of this process is to ensure that AP courses around the world, most of which are currently being taught at a very high level, will receive immediate and efficient authorization. The deadline for submitting AP Course Audit materials for 2007-08 AP courses is June 1, 2007.

<http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/Controller.jspf>

THE

FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEK

As their enrollment numbers continue to trickle away, many of Idaho's rural school districts are switching to a 4-day school week to save money - and are seeing some extra benefits. At Marsh Valley HS, one of the latest school districts to make the switch as an experiment this year, teachers say attendance has gone up. At Bear Lake High, where they're in their second year of a four-day week, teachers say students show up fresher and ready to learn. "I'm almost convinced the four-day week is better than chocolate," said Marsh Valley High Principal Gary Yearsely. "Personally, I'd hate to go back to a five-day now." Public schools in Idaho are funded through state money, which is handed out on a per-pupil basis. As these schools' enrollments decline, the money they get from the state goes down with them. The four-day week is meant to save money by cutting down on utility payments. Classroom thermostats at Marsh Valley High are dialed down from 70 degrees to 55 degrees on Fridays, and it's not uncommon to see teachers bundled up in their winter coats in their classrooms on Fridays getting in extra work. *NOTE: Some schools/districts use the "fifth day" as a professional*

*development day
for teachers.*

http://www.sltrib.com/education/ci_4859198

COMMENTARY: UNIFORM CORE CURRICULUM NOT DESIRABLE

Plans to adopt an across-the-board curriculum for Portland, Oregon, secondary schools would hamper teacher creativity and harm school choice, writes Gregory Smith, a professor at Lewis & Clark College's Graduate School of Education and Counseling. Texas schools, for instance, have had NAEP scores drop since it adopted common standards. (see accompanying CASN News HS Files for full commentary.)

DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS TO STEP UP OVERSIGHT OF U.S. DEPT OF EDUCATION

The two veteran Democrats preparing to chair the education committees -- Representative George Miller of California and Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts -- say Republican lawmakers have largely looked the other way while the GOP administration has employed questionable practices for distributing federal grants, done little to gauge the effectiveness of tutors hired with federal dollars, and let states slide on some of the teacher-quality requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. Many observers expect Democratic-led House and Senate education committees to quickly launch investigations into the Reading First program, a signature Bush administration program that has provided nearly \$5 billion in federal grants to schools to promote research-based reading instruction. Alyson Klein reports that other areas of inquiry could include the Education Department's process for approving contracts and grants, student financial aid, teacher quality and gender equity.

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2006/12/20/16oversight.h26.html>

NEW TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATORS

The International Society for Technology in Education has revised the guidelines for what it believes students should know about technology prior to graduation. They're seeking feedback from educators on a draft version of the new guidelines.

<http://cnets.iste.org>

CAN A CLASSROOM INTERVENTION REDUCE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP BY 40%?

A report in a recent issue of Science magazine presents research showing that a classroom-based intervention significantly improved the grades of a group of African-American middle school students & reduced the racial achievement gap between those students & their white student peers by 40%. The research was conducted by a team from the Psychology Departments at the University of Colorado, Boulder, & Yale University, & funded in large part by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation.

"Reducing the Racial Achievement Gap: A Social-Psychological Intervention," details the findings of two rigorously structured field experiments that were designed to test the theory of "social identity and stereotype threat." The theory holds that, in certain "evaluative situations," when minority students are concerned that other students or teachers may hold negative stereotypes about their group's abilities, their concern can impair their ability to perform well in those situations. The intervention included a positive "affirmation exercise," which was designed to reduce the stress caused by this threat. Although the results of the

experiments are exciting and promising, the authors are

quick to point out that the intervention is not a "silver bullet" for eliminating the achievement gap.

<http://www.nmefdn.org/NewsandEvents/pubs.aspx?a=61b43aef-bf79-4aed-a684-fda4297de109&l=Press%20Releases&rl=~/NewsandEvents/>

FEATURED PRACTICE: SHADOW CLASS PROGRAM

In the Napa Valley Unified School District (NVUSD) middle & high

schoolers performing far below proficiency are getting extra help from

the district's new shadow class program. Taken in lieu of an elective,

the shadow or parallel class is small, with typically 10-15 students

who also attend the regular class, both taught by the same teacher.

Through this double exposure the teacher gets to know her students

academically very well, & so can better understand student's

stumbling blocks & customize strategies to help ready them for

upcoming regular lessons. For example, before students read a book in

the regular class, the teacher may frontload content & vocabulary,

& use Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE),

sheltered strategies, & other English language development methods,

as appropriate.

The shadow class program has been effective in NVUSD, increasing the percentage of middle & high school students who are proficient in math & English, while decreasing the percentage who are far below basic & below basic. As Elena Toscano, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction, says, "Over the past three years, we have seen the percentage of 8th grade students proficient in English language arts increase from 35% to 44% in and the percentage of 8th grade students who are far below basic drop from 32% to 23%, a decrease from a third of the students to almost a fifth."

Because of the shadow class program, the district was able to discontinue 8th grade General Math last year & put over 1000 students into Algebra I – with the accompanying benefit of having a shadow class with their same teachers. (source: WestEd)

REPORTS, PUBLICATIONS, & WEB RESOURCES

Tough Choices or Tough Times

This report from the National Center on Education and the Economy's Commission on the Skills of American Workforce calls for states to set curriculum and to hire and train teachers, the creation of regional authorities to assess educational needs of growth industries and the development of new state tests that go beyond simply measuring knowledge.

Read the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce report:

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

Read The Washington Post story on the report:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/14/AR2006121401532.html>

Commission on No Child Left Behind Releases Final Report to Congress

On February 13, the Commission on No Child Left Behind, a bipartisan, independent effort dedicated to improving the No Child Left Behind Act, released its report, *Beyond NCLB: Fulfilling the Promise to Our Nation's Children*. Recommendations specific to high school include an additional test in twelfth grade and requiring low-performing districts to implement a district-wide improvement plan.

Access the Full Report:

http://www.aspeninstitute.org/site/c.huLWJeMRKpH/b.938015/k.40DA/Commission_on_No_Child_Left_Behind.htm

More Students Passing AP Tests

A new study from the College Board found that nearly 15 percent of students graduating high school in 2006 passed at least one Advanced Placement exam, a rise from 10 percent of the class of 2000. All states have also increased minority performance on the tests, particularly among Latino students.

(link to full report available at

<http://www.collegeboard.compress/releases/152694.html>)

America's Perfect Storm: Three Forces Changing our Nation's Future

This report from the Educational Testing Service examines the convergence of three powerful sociological and economical forces that are changing our nation's future: substantial disparities in skill levels, seismic economic changes and sweeping demographic shifts. (link to full report available at

<http://www.ets.org/portal/site/ets/menuitem.148851>)

Addressing America's Dropout Challenge: State Efforts to Boost Graduation Rates Require Federal Support

This report from the Center for American Progress and Jobs for the Future proposes the Graduation Promise Act of 2007 that would establish a federal commitment to partner with states, districts, and schools to raise graduation rates. (NOTE: lead writer is the oh-so-fabulous Adria Steinberg at JFF)

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2006/11/pdf/hs_grad_report.pdf

Redesigning High School in 10 Honor States: A Midterm Report

This report from the National Governors Association provides an overview of the high school redesign work of ten states during the first year of their High School Honor State grants, a program launched by the NGA with funds from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. (See

<http://www.nga.org/portal/site/nga/menuitem.1f41d> to download the full report)

College Access Supports

A recent study by the nonprofit consulting group Bridgespan Group identifies and ranks "college access supports," meaning factors other

than academic preparedness which influence the likelihood of students

earning a college degree. The study concluded that the two most

critical supports are (1) an awareness of the link between college

and career aspirations and (2) positive attitudes toward college

attendance among a student's closest peer group.

Some Statistics of interest from the same report:

* High School dropouts are four times as likely to be unemployed

as college graduates.

* Dropouts are two and a half times as likely to be arrested as

high school graduates.

* Only half of the students who enter 9th grade will enroll in college.

* The level of math taken in high school strongly

correlates with college completion.

* Only 14% of high school students who do not meet a rigorous standard

of academic preparedness will graduate from college.

<http://www.techprepswohio.org/documents/BridgespancollegeaccessOctober2006.pdf>

Trends & Comparisons in California School

Finance

Efforts to improve student achievement over the last 10 years have had a dramatic effect on how Californians think about their schools and how they measure their success. But to what extent has the school finance system changed in response to these reforms? A new data-rich EdSource report, "Trends and Comparisons in California School Finance," looks at how school district revenues and expenditures in California have changed over time, how they compare to other states, and how they relate to state and federal reform policies. To order online go to: http://www.edsource.org/pub_abs_trends107.cfm

New! Resource Guide For Action: Transforming High School For All Youth

This recently launched online guide from the National High School Alliance provides help for policymakers and practitioners as they work to transform high schools to ensure all students are ready for college, careers, and active civic participation. The Resource Guide offers expertise, tools, strategies, research, and indicators protocols for each of the six principles of the HS Alliance's publication, *A Call to Action: Transforming High School for All Youth*. <http://www.hsalliance.org>

Web Resource: Students as Allies in Improving Their Schools

What if teachers and students became steady allies rather than frequent adversaries? What would it take for students to become stakeholders not just in their own success but also in that of their teachers and schools?

With support from MetLife Foundation, What Kids Can Do (WKCD) has explored these

questions for several years in an initiative called "Students as Allies." In Chicago, Houston, Oakland, Philadelphia, & St. Louis, WKCD has collaborated with teams of students & teachers organized by a local partnership. The efforts in each city include several aspects: helping students conduct survey research about their own schools, then supporting dialogue & constructive action around the research results, while nurturing youth leadership all along the way. To access tools, publications, sample surveys, & data about what has been gathered & learned:
<http://www.whatkidscando.org/studentallies/studentalliesintro.html>

New Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities Web Page

This new web page from the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth identifies the knowledge, skills, and abilities required by youth service practitioners to work effectively with all youth, including youth with disabilities, in the workforce development system. The website includes resources to strengthen these competencies, and suggests strategies for organizations and systems to support the development of a system of professional development for these practitioners. <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/ksa/index.htm>

Rethinking High School: Inaugural Graduations at New York City's New High Schools

<http://www.wested.org/cs/we/view/rs/830>

Working Together: Aligning State Systems and Policies for Individual and Regional Prosperity

This new report from the Workforce Strategy Center offers state policymakers recommendations for improving economic well-being through the alignment of education, workforce and economic

development policies. The report focuses on six areas in which policymakers can take action to enhance outcomes for students, align public policies and systems, and support individual and regional economic advancement. <http://www.workforcestrategy.org> (NOTE: You can also download "The Career Pathways How to Guide" at this site.)

Healthier and Wealthier: Decreasing Health Care Costs by Increasing Educational Attainment

This issue brief from the Alliance for Excellent Education argues that higher educational attainment improves a student's future income, occupational status, and social prestige, therefore improving individual health and lowering health care costs.

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

Double the Work: Challenges and Solutions to Acquiring Language and Academic Literacy for Adolescent English Language Learners

<http://www.carnegie.org/literacy/pdf/DoubletheWork.pdf>

*** **Featured Online Magazine: Threshold** *** The Winter 2007 issue of *Threshold: Exploring the Future of Education* features articles focused on personalizing education and was produced in partnership with SETDA, the State Educational Technology Directors Association. Among the articles in this issue: "Teaching Each and Every One," Dianne Ferguson (describes three strategies to help teachers target effective learning for all students); "A New Model for 21st-Century Education," Jeff Wright; "Personalization in Schools: A Threshold Forum," Mary Ann Wolf, Monica Beglau, Thomas Greaves, Larry Rosenstock, and David Warlick (discusses current state of personalization, roles of technology, and hopes for the future); "Mapping the Future: New Tools and Strategies," (From wireless student handhelds to better data monitoring for teachers, new ideas and initiatives are reshaping the education landscape); "It's My Laptop," Saul Rockman, (Personal computing in a 1:1 world is different for every child); "Assessment for Learning: Using General Outcomes Measures," Ruth Kaminski & Kelli Cummings, (provides an overview of assessment approaches that can help administrators & teachers personalize instruction for individual students) NOTE: *Threshold* is a publication of *Cable in the Classroom Online*.

<http://www.ciconline.org/thresholdwinter07>

WHAT ARE WE READING?

Sent to the Principal: Students Talk About Making High Schools Better Kathleen Cushman, High school leaders need the crucial

perspective of their students. This book shares the insights of teengagers on a wide range of issues, including electives, dress codes, detention policies, school security, and more, proving that if students help make school a place they care about, they invest in their own success. (Next Generation Press)

Students Are Stakeholders, Too, Edie L. Holcomb, Based on real events that have yielded positive results for both school culture & student achievement, this inspiring story introduces the students & staff of Knownwell HS & involves you in their journey of school improvement. Educators can practice real democracy within their school community by inviting students to discuss their interests, needs, & preferences about school matters. The author provides school leaders with practical strategies for promoting greater interaction between adults & students through every phase of the school improvement process. (Corwin Press)

Cross-X by Joe Miller

"The Amazing True Story of how the most unlikely team from the most unlikely of places overcame staggering obstacles at home and at school to challenge the debate community on race, power, and education."

"Cross-X is an inspirational story of courage, fortitude, perseverance, and imagination. It reminds us that each and every person makes a difference in changing the direction any one person's life can take, and, by extension, any one community, any one nation. I am glad Joe Miller's book has a chance to share a story of hope with the rest of us." (Farrar Straus Giroux)

SOME WEBSITES FOR TEACHERS & STUDENTS

***** *Curriki.org* *****

Imagine a world where science teachers in India could swap lesson plans with their counterparts in California, or where students in a rural high school in Nebraska could try their hand at mathematics problems written for an audience halfway across the globe--in China, or Germany, or Italy, for example.

Thanks to the internet and the evolution of web-based software programs in schools, many old geographic barriers no longer exist. Now, a new online community has emerged that promises to democratize the process of curriculum development, giving educators the ability to tailor instructional content to the needs of their students, wherever they are, free of charge.

Dubbed the "Wikipedia of curriculum" by its creators, the online community known as Curriki where educators from anywhere in

the world can post curricula and lesson plans for review and use by fellow classroom teachers.

To read a longer Eschool News story on curriki, see:

<http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/showStoryts.cfm?ArticleID=6787>

<http://www.curriki.org>

An Invitation To a Virtual Service-Learning Trip To Cambodia

Hello all! We are excited to extend an invitation to you and your students

to join us virtually on our service learning trip to Cambodia.

Who are we? We are a group of college professors, educators, students, high school students, and even middle school students who comprise RCTC's (Rochester Community and Technical College of Rochester, MN) contingent to study intercultural communication, facilitate intercultural exchange and friendship, build school storage sheds, help install toilets and wells, and carry out a host of different individual projects (e.g. interview killing fields survivors, work with local aid agencies, etc..) while traveling through Cambodia--Angkor Wat, and the beaches of Sianhoukville included.

Join us on our website

<http://www.cambodiarctc.project.mnscu.edu/>

for pictures, podcasts, and daily weblogs of our trip and the many

projects of the students.

Thank you.

Lori Halverson-Wente lori.halverson@roch.edu

Mark Halverson-Wente

markhw2002@yahoo.com

Searching for China: A Full WebQuest (Grades 9-12)

This WebQuest asks students to formulate a position on U.S. foreign

policy toward China through an examination of China from six

perspectives: Business, Cultural, Religious, Human Rights, Environmental, & Political. Doing justice to this WebQuest would be a significant undertaking best accomplished over two or three weeks.

Students are asked to take on roles related to the six perspectives, and are presented with links to "dossiers" of information related to their roles.

<http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/China/ChinaQuest.html>

Note: With the upcoming Olympics in China in 2008, teachers may wish to introduce more content about China into their curricula. The resources presented here are very comprehensive & require thought & analysis. In addition, this WebQuest includes an interesting feature: a javascript-enabled format that allows students to enter information they've gathered into several "forms" &

then have that information returned to them in the format of an individual &/or group report.

The Visual Effects Periodic Table Grades 5 - 12

http://www.chemsoc.org/viselements/pages/pertable_fl.htm

Way to Write! An Interactive Guide to Writing - Grades 8-12

This is a great site to work with students directly in the classroom.

It deals with inspiration, organization, composition, revision, presentation, and correction of writing in a way that would enable students to link to each individual problem they might be having in that section.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/writing>

(NOTE: There are links to a Grammar Site and to other writing sites.)

In the Classroom:

This would be especially good for working in the computer lab with students or even in portable classroom labs where students might work in pairs. You might choose one section for demonstration on a projector or whiteboard, then allow the students to look at/use different parts of the site as individuals or pairs. This site might also be an excellent student resource link on your teacher web page.

National Library of Virtual Manipulatives

provides interactive online math lessons, activities, and assessments. Topics include fractions, functions, geometric transformations, integer arithmetic, patterns and sequences, probability, right triangle trigonometry, slope, triangle geometry, and writing equations of lines. Calculate what an excavation company should charge for digging a hole. Analyze three pollution

reduction plans. Determine the best rate for repaying a loan. (Utah State University, National Science Foundation)

http://free.ed.gov/resource.cfm?resource_id=1851

Grand Challenges for Engineering

Grand Challenges for Engineering asks engineers, scientists, and us: What will be the next great ideas in engineering? Read about the challenges of landing on Mars, engineering for the developing world, and illumination in computer graphics. (National Academy of Engineering, National Science Foundation)

http://free.ed.gov/resource.cfm?resource_id=1854

NIST Metric Information and Conversions

provides background on the metric system and exercises to help students learn to "think metric." Find information about metric units and sports, metric activities associated with the Wright Brothers' flight experiments, and conversion tables for length, area, temperature, and volume. (National Institute of Standards

and Technology)

http://free.ed.gov/resource.cfm?resource_id=1853

Project Poster Grades 2 - 12

Use this terrific online tool for your students to create posters or short reports in a poster format. The teacher sets up an account (for free), and follow simple directions so students can upload images and write about their project or pictures. The site even include management tools so you can keep separate classes of students and see their work by class. Students can share the URL for their posters with grandparents or parents to show off their good work!

<http://poster.4teachers.org>

In the Classroom:

Students will need to know how to locate and upload a file for an image (such as a digital picture) to place it in their poster. When students use images from the web, the tool asks them to give information on their image source. Some uses for this simple tool: book reports (take a digital photo of the book cover), biographical posters of famous people (images from the web), "all about me" posters, posters

about community members such as veterans of World War II whom students interview and photograph, author posters, fictitious character studies, science posters on processes or terms with accompanying digital pictures to illustrate, etc. The possibilities are endless. Once students know the tool, they can use it over and over. If you use digital pictures of students, be SURE that you do NOT use full names on the site. You should get parent permission for uploading any student images, even if anonymous.

Groupvine Grades 9 - 12

Groupvine is a free (for now) tool for groups such as student council, clubs, teams, or even academic project groups to organize their files, maintain a common calendar, and organize "to-do" lists. If you are a club adviser or ask students to complete long-range group projects, you should consider using Groupvine. <http://thegroupvine.com>

NOTE: Although the site appears to be primarily for college groups, Groupwise welcomes high school users as well. Skills needed: register to request a group space, follow simple tour and instructions to create groups, to-do lists, calendars, etc. If you plan to have students use the site independently, perhaps demonstrate it on an interactive whiteboard or projector so all are in agreement on how you will use the tools within your organization. If students will be posting, use initials or first names only.

Education for Life We already know that kids who stay in school will have better jobs and earn more money. But new research indicates that education actually contributes to longer life. That's right: Stay in school and live longer. And, as a bonus, those extra years will be marked by better health. "If you were to ask me what affects health and longevity, I would put education at the top of my list," says Michael Grossman, a health economist who studies the factors that affect human life expectancy. The question of how education is related to longevity was originally tackled by a graduate student, who tracked how life expectancies increased when states began requiring more years of compulsory schooling back in the early 1900s. Life expectancy at age 35 was extended by as much as 1.5 years simply from going to school for an extra year—even after controlling for other factors, such as wealth and race. In fact, education's effect on lifespan outpaces the influence of geographic location, churchgoing, family background, and health insurance. It's just one more reason to ensure that every child receives an excellent education. (source: a posting in Teacher Magazine)

Best Practice Example: Companies to Classrooms

Thanks to the efforts of an enterprising parent, teachers in the Bloomington, Minnesota, district may not have to dip into their own pockets for school supplies much longer. Next month, Cary Weatherby, 49, plans to open a 6,700 square-foot store that will provide school supplies to local educators for free. Weatherby has spent two years preparing for the opening—a process that involved rummaging around company loading docks and garage

sales. ("I saw what was being thrown away," she says.) Along the way she also created Companies to Classrooms, a nonprofit that enables local businesses to donate excess supplies to Bloomington schools, and raised enough money for six months' rent. On the question of whether school systems should give teachers adequate supplies, Weatherby maintains a dogged impartiality. "I wonder about it, but I don't get upset," she says. "I'll let other people deal with the big issues."

SOME UPCOMING EVENTS

California Partnership Academies Conference

The annual California Partnership Academies Conference will be on March 11-13, 2007, in San Diego. (Always a good conference which attracts participants from all over the country) A Conference Brochure is available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/partnershipacademies>

Department of Education Announces Sites for Summer Regional Teacher Workshops

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) has named 22 cities as sites for its annual summer regional workshops for teachers to learn best practices from fellow educators who have been successful in raising student achievement. The workshops are part of the ED's Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative. Each of the free workshops will include numerous breakout sessions featuring effective teachers and practitioners sharing strategies that have been successful in their classrooms, schools and districts.

The workshop dates, locations, and subjects covered are listed below. Agendas are being posted at <http://www.ed.gov/teacherinitiative>.

Registration will begin on April 8, 2007. (*Register early as these workshops fill quickly.*)

- May 31-June 1; Houston, Texas; math, science
- June 5-6; Albuquerque, N.M.; reading, art, history, languages
- June 7-8; El Paso, Texas (Chamizal National Memorial); reading, history
- June 12-13; Homestead, Fla. (Everglades National Park); science
- June 19-20; Estes Park, Colo. (Rocky Mountain National Park); reading, science, history
- June 21-22; Phoenix, Ariz.; reading, science, math for charter school teachers
- June 25-26; Santa Clara, Calif; math, science
- June 27-28; Orange County, Calif.; reading, math, art, early

childhood

- July 9-10; Redmond, Wash.; math, science
- July 9-10; Mountain View, Calif.; math, science
- July 12-13; Austin, Texas; math
- July 16-17; Schaumburg, Ill.; math, science
- July 19-20; Louisville, Ky.; reading, early childhood, languages, art
- July 23-24, Miami, Fla.; reading, math, science for charter school

teachers

- July 25-26; Waltham, Mass.; math, science
- July 30-31; Porter, Ind. (Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore); science,

history

- July 31-Aug 1; Warren, Mich.; math, science
- Aug 2-3; Herndon, Va.; foreign languages
- Aug 2-3; Reno, Nev.; math, science
- Aug 6-7; Lowell, Mass. (Lowell National Historic Park); history, science, art
- Aug 6-7; Chicago, Ill.; math, science
- Aug 9-10; Anchorage, Alaska (Alaska National Parks) reading, math,

science, history, art

<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2007/01/01092007.html>

SOME FUNDING & AWARD OPPORTUNITIES

****Student Op-Ed Writing Contest About Dafur****

High School and College Students are invited to participate in the 2006-2007 Writing Contest for Dafur. Op-Ed pieces submitted

must be published in a school or public newspaper by March 1, 2007.

Contest Entree forms must be postmarked by March 1, 2007.

http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/alert/students/events/2006_contest/

Lemelsen-MIT Inventeams Program

This program offers grants of up to \$10,000 to teams of high school students, teachers, and mentors who identify a problem and invent a solution for it. Applications are due April 27; apply at web.mit.edu/inventeams.

Connect With the Troops Project

The publishing company Connect and Join sponsors the Connect with the Troops Project, which will attempt to compile a 120,000-page scrapbook to communicate with and express support for

U.S. troops or individual soldiers serving in the Middle East. For more information, visit www.connectandjoin.com or www.connectwiththetroops.com.

Recognizing Excellence and Innovation in Teaching History

The Beveridge Family Teaching Prize recognizes excellence and innovation in elementary, middle school, and secondary history teaching,

including career contributions and specific initiatives. Maximum Award:

\$1,500. Eligibility: K-12 teachers. Deadline: March 15, 2007.

<http://www.historians.org/teaching/Beveridge.htm>

Teacher to Ranger to Teacher Program

If you teach in Colorado, Texas, or Arizona, the National Park Service would like to offer a very special opportunity to you through a program called Teacher to Ranger to Teacher (TRT). The intent of the TRT program is to give teachers the opportunity to work in a national park, become park ranger for eight weeks, and develop lesson plans based on their experience for use in their classroom the following year. This challenge has been developed so that teachers can help us to provide opportunities for all Americans to connect to their national heritage as embodied by national parks. The TRT program focuses on teachers from schools with diverse student populations, students who have had no experience with national parks or little opportunity to explore the relevance these areas can have in their lives.

If you are interested in the Teacher to Ranger to Teacher program and would like to be a Teacher-Ranger, or would just like additional information, please visit

<http://www.nps.gov/wupa/forteachers/trt.htm> or contact any of the following people below. Currently, we are only able to offer this opportunity to teachers in Colorado, Texas, and Arizona, but hope to open up the opportunity to any teacher over the next couple of years.

Linda Lutz-Ryan, Colorado Coordinator, 303.969.2638

linda_lutz-ryan@nps.gov

Leslie Dubey, Texas Coordinator, 409.246.2487

leslie_dubey@nps.gov

Jacob Fillion, Arizona Coordinator, 928.638.7762

jacob_fillion@nps.gov

Grants to Increase Impact of Service-Learning Projects on Climate Change

Youth Service America and the Civil Society Institute are awarding Red, White, and Green Climate Change Grants to design a service-learning project that promotes awareness about climate change and possible solutions. Projects should be youth-led, and the service must take place between May 1 and October 31, 2007. Maximum Award: \$500. Eligibility: youth between the ages of 15-25 or to organizations that serve engage youth ages 15-25. Deadline: March 9, 2007. <http://www.ysa.org/awards/>

Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching

(PAEMST) Each year, the President of the United States recognizes outstanding mathematics & science teachers by bestowing upon them the

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Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics & Science Teaching

(PAEMST). Awards are given to teachers in each state and four U.S.

jurisdictions, including Washington, D.C.; Puerto Rico; Department of

Defense Schools; & the U.S. territories (American Samoa, Guam, the

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, & the U.S. Virgin

Islands). The PAEMST program is administered by the National Science

Foundation (NSF) on behalf of the White House. The 2007 PAEMST

program will honor 7th thru 12th-grade mathematics and science teachers.

Each awardee receives a \$10,000 award from NSF and gifts from a broad range of donors. Awardees and their guests are honored during events that take place in Washington, D.C., over the course of a week-long celebration. These events include an awards ceremony, celebratory receptions and banquets, and professional development program. Deadline:

May 1, 2007. Contact:

<http://www.paemst.org/page.cfm?pageID=2>

ACTE Career and Technical Education Essay Contest

The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) is sponsoring

an essay contest in the memory of former ACTE Senior Director of

Communications, Cliff Weiss (1951 -2004). This year, students will be asked

to respond to the question, "How will what you learned in CTE help the

American economy in five years?" The essay should be no less than 500

words in length for postsecondary and no more than 500 words in length

for secondary students. Maximum Award: \$250 and publication in ACTE's

Techniques Magazine. Eligibility: students enrolled in at least one CTE

course. Deadline: March 30, 2007.

<http://www.acteonline.org/about/awards/CWMEC/index.cfm>

Outstanding Special Education Teacher Award

The National Association of Special Education Teachers
Outstanding

Special Education Teacher Award is given to educators
who have

demonstrated outstanding achievement in the field of
special education.

Maximum Award: N/A. Eligibility: full-time, certified or
licensed, special

education teachers with 3 or more years' teaching
experience. Deadline:

May 1, 2007.

<http://www.naset.org/specialeducationteac.0.html>

Awards to Encourage Peers to Graduate from High School and College

Youth Venture, the Bill & Melinda Gates

Foundation and MTV Tr3s Voces

will select teams of two or more youth every week through
June 29th who

submit great ideas for encouraging their peers to graduate
from high

school and college. Tu Voz My Venture winners will receive
grants to

create their ventures -- an organization, business or club
to help young

Latinos stay in school and prepare for college and careers.

Maximum

Award: \$1000. Eligibility: youth ages 13–20. Deadline:

June 29, 2007.

<http://www.youthventure.org/index.php?tg=articles&topics=388&new=0&newc=0&PHPSESSID=8692941b5d1f7d2fd360e34f450a6e69>

2007 A+ for Energy Program: BP to Award PreK-12 Teachers \$5M

in Grants & Scholarships

for innovative classroom, after-school, extra-curricular,

or summer projects focused on energy and/or energy conservation aligned with the application criteria. Grants are awarded directly to teachers, reflecting the budget request submitted with the application. Application form: <http://www.aplusforenergy.com>
For more information: 977.243.6760. Deadline: March 23, 2007