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"What is keeping us from bringing such examples [of extraordinary success] to scale is not a lack of solutions but a frailty of belief. We can absolutely replicate and expand success, and poverty does not have to mean low achievement and expectations."

- D.C. Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee

"It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope." - Robert F. Kennedy

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TOWARD A FY2011 FEDERAL EDUCATION BUDGET

A few highlights from the President's Education Budget Proposal include:

- * Title I, a main source of federal K-12 funding to local districts (\$14.5 B) receives no increase.
- * Teacher quality state grants and the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) have been consolidated in a program area called Innovation and Instructional Teams (\$6.3 B)
- * IDEA state grants for special education receive \$250M increase (\$11.75 B)
- * School Improvement Grants for lowest-performing schools increased by \$354.4 M.

- * English Language Learners program increased by \$50 M.
- * 21st Century Learning Communities program - no increase (\$1.2 B)
- * Perkins Career and Technical Education - no increase
- * Tech Prep State Grants (\$103 M) eliminated & moved into larger CTE program (\$1.3 B)
- * 6 programs would be eliminated (including several special scholarship programs)
- * 38 separate K-12 programs would be consolidated into 11 programs.
- * Elimination of all congressional earmarks for education, except for funding for the Data Quality Campaign (savings of \$217 M)
- * \$1B in new funding contingent on reauthorization of No Child Left Behind

A few other high-school related program proposals:

The proposed College Pathways and Accelerated Learning program would be designed to increase graduation rates and preparation for college matriculation and success by providing college-level and other accelerated courses and instruction, including gifted and talented programs, in high-poverty schools. Grantees would implement such strategies as expanding the availability of Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate (AP/IB) courses, dual-enrollment programs that allow students to take college-level courses and earn college credit while in high school, and "early college high schools" that allow students to earn a high school degree and an Associate's degree or two years of college credit simultaneously.

For those of you who asked about SLC funding: Funding for Smaller Learning Communities would be eliminated in Obama's budget and the funds would instead be used for Charter School Grants and Voluntary Public School Choice programs as part of a new category entitled Expanding Educational Options. (There will still be a SLC grant competition later this year involving FY 2010 funds. Also, in the past, SLC funding was not in George W. Bush's

funding proposals, but was added by the House and Senate during the budget development process. This year, however, with so much funding going to Race to the Top, additional new SLC funding (other than the continuation funding for existing grantees) is less unlikely for FY 2011, but there are always surprises. Speak your voice. Encourage your stakeholders -- parents and partners -- to do the same.)

Again, this is only the initial President's/Department of Education's budget proposal for education. The U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate will still have their input into the education budget which eventually evolves. This is always a time for our education advocacy. You can contact your elected representatives and make a case for education funding that is important to you, your school, your District, and your community. Our voice matters.

A summary of the President's/U.S. Department of Education's federal education funding proposal for FY 2011 can be found at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget11/summary/index.html>

STATE APPLICATIONS FOR RACE TO THE TOP

The United States Department of Education is providing the public with the applications it received from states applying to the Race to the Top program. The Department is posting the applications in two stages. Currently, only the states' narrative responses to the application criteria have been released. Because each state had some flexibility in determining the placement of the information provided in its application, the narrative statements for some states include information that other states determined were best included in the appendices. So with the caveat, that you are seeing only the narrative (only a partial application), you can download the narratives submitted at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/phase1-applications/index.html>

You can also find most full applications on the websites of specific states. Also, if -- as an example -- you wished to review the Louisiana application, you might simply google "Louisiana" "Race to the Top" and be taken to a link on a Louisiana state website with the full application, including narrative, appendice, budget, etc.

AS FEDERAL STIMULUS MONEY DRIES UP, MANY SCHOOLS FACE A "FUNDING CLIFF"

Federal stimulus money has helped avoid drastic cuts at public schools in most parts of the nation, at least so far. But with the federal money running out, many of the nation's schools are approaching what officials are calling a "funding cliff." Congress included about \$100 billion for education in the stimulus law last year to cushion the recession's impact on schools and to help fuel an economic recovery. New studies show that many states will spend all or nearly all that is left between now and the end of this school term.

STATES MUST ADOPT PROPOSED COMMON STANDARDS AS A WHOLE DOCUMENT

States that adopt proposed common academic standards must use the entire document word for word, leaders of the initiative said.... Answering questions from state school board members at a recent meeting, representatives of the two groups leading the effort to design common standards said that states may not revise them or select only portions to adopt.

"You can't pick and choose what you want. This is not cafeteria-style standards," said David Wakelyn, the program director of the education division of the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices.

"Adoption means adoption," said Scott Montgomery, a deputy executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, which is organizing the common-standards endeavor with the NGA.

Mr. Wakelyn and Mr. Montgomery sought to clarify an element of the agreement that 48 states signed last year in pledging support for the Common Core Standards Initiative. It said that the common standards,

which are being written for English/language arts and mathematics, must represent "at least 85 percent of the state's standards" in those subjects.

Some thought that meant states could craft a set of standards with 85 percent of the common standards and 15 percent of their own. But NGA and CCSSO officials said that states must approve the entire common-standards document verbatim. They may choose to add 15 percent of their own material. How that 15 percent would be measured remains an open question.

EIGHT STATES PILOT PROGRAM TO OFFER EARLY GRADUATION, COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

Eight states will take part in a pilot program in fall 2011 to allow 10th-grade students who pass a series of board exams to graduate early and begin taking community-college courses. Dozens of public high schools in Connecticut, Kentucky, Maine, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont plan to offer the option, which is modeled after similar programs in high-achieving countries such as Denmark and Singapore. It is being organized by the National Center on Education and the Economy and planning is being funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

GROUP BEGINS WORK ON NEW SET OF NATIONAL SCIENCE STANDARDS

A panel of experts assembled by the National Research Council has begun work on a new set of national science standards for schools. The "next generation" standards will focus science instruction on a smaller number of important concepts and will aim to deepen students' understanding of science in preference to learning disconnected facts and figures. "The research is pretty clear that helping kids answer the right fill-in-the-bubble [questions] doesn't make them science-literate," an NRC official said. "And our goal is, we want a scientifically capable society." (source: Education Week)

GATES FOUNDATION FUNDS DEVELOPMENT OF TOOLS AND ASSESSMENTS FOR NEW NATIONAL COLLEGE AND CAREER STANDARDS IN MATH AND LITERACY

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced 15 grants -- totaling \$19.5 million -- for the development of instructional tools and assessments to put new national academic standards in math and literacy to work in the classroom. The grants will go to university researchers who are expected to develop resources such as course outlines, diagnostic devices, syllabuses and tests that align with the standards and prepare students for college. Some school districts will pilot the assessments as early as this fall.

41.5% OF STUDENT AP TEST TAKERS FAILED AP EXAMS IN 2009

More students are taking Advanced Placement exams, but the percentage who fail the exams has also increased -- leading some to question whether some students are ready for the rigorous AP lessons and whether educators are being properly trained to teach the classes. An USA TODAY analysis shows 36.5% of students failed the exams in 1999, compared with 41.5% in 2009. The percentage of students failing the exams was even worse in the South: 48.4%. However, data show that Maryland has had success in enrolling more students in AP classes and in the number who are passing the exams and earning college credit.

MORE SCHOOLS ADD SERVICE PROJECTS TO THE CURRICULUM

More schools are integrating community service projects that address global issues such as the recent earthquake in Haiti as well as local concerns into their curriculum. One suburban Virginia school is aiming to combine service projects with subjects such as art, science and technology, and another will add a community service requirement to help students "be respectful and contributing participants in their school, community, country and world." (source: Washington Post)

ANOTHER MIDDLE COLLEGE SUCCESS STORY (Raehoke, N.C.)

In Raehoke, N.C., 48 seniors are in a fast-track program that earns a high school diploma and up to two years of college credit in five years --

completely free, reports The New York Times. Most programs like these serve affluent, overachieving students as a way to keep them challenged and to give a head start on college work, but the SandHoke Early College High School enrolls kids whose parents lack college degrees. SandHoke is one of 71 "early-college schools" in the state -- where high school students attend college courses -- specifically designed to eliminate the divide between high school and college for at-risk kids. "Last year, half our early-college high schools had zero dropouts, and that's just unprecedented for North Carolina, where only 62 percent of our high school students graduate after four years," said Tony Habit, president of the North Carolina New Schools Project, the nonprofit that spearheaded this reform. Significantly, North Carolina's early-college high school students are performing slightly better than their college classmates. This model is now spreading in California, New York, Texas, and elsewhere, and is seen as a promising approach to reducing the high school dropout rate and increasing the number of degree holders. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/08/education/08school.html?ref=education>

PILOT PROGRAM TAPS STUDENTS TO TEACH EDUCATORS ABOUT TECHNOLOGY

Students will help teach middle- and high-school teachers how to best use technology in the classroom as part of a partnership between Microsoft and the Corporation for National and Community Service. The program, called START, or Service and Technology Academic Resource Team, builds on the success of similar initiatives and is being piloted at schools in New York, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Virginia and California.

COLORADO HS PROMOTES USE OF IPODS, CELL-PHONES AS LEARNING DEVICES

Officials are changing the technology policies at a Colorado high school to allow students to use cell phones and iPods as educational tools. The new policy helps mitigate the school's lack of computers while teaching students how to adapt the devices for learning. One science teacher has students using video features on their phones to record geology lessons for future review and use mobile Internet to find a photo of a type of rock. "They know

how to use them as toys, but if we don't teach them how to use them as tools, who's going to?" the teacher said.

OBAMA OFFERS RACE TO THE TOP COMMENCEMENT CHALLENGE

President Obama has a challenge for the nation's public high schools: Prove your school is the best, and he'll come speak to your graduation this year.

"I'm excited to announce the first annual race to the top high school commencement challenge," President Obama says in the video message, "Just go to whitehouse.gov/commencement, and fill out an application by march 15th telling us why your school is special and why it should be a model for other schools around the country working to boost attendance and increase the number of graduates prepared for college or a career."

High schools are instructed to complete four essay questions focused "on demonstrating how the school is helping prepare students to meet the President's 2020 goal of having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world," the White House says.

"This spring I'll visit the winning school to speak at commencement," the president promises, "Good luck and thank you for doing your part to help make our students the best and brightest in the world."

Applicants can also submit video or "supplemental data" – like attendance rate or graduation rate – for consideration as well.

The White House says applications will be judged based on the school's performance and dedication to an education that will prepare them to graduate ready for college and career choices.

Six finalists will be selected by the White House and Department of Education. These schools will then be featured on the White House website and the public will have an opportunity to vote for the three schools they think best meet the President's goal.

The President will select a national winner from these three finalists and visit the winning high school to deliver the commencement address to the class of 2010.

The First Lady has issued a similar challenge to George Washington University – if their student body completes 100,000 hours of community service this year, Mrs. Obama has promised to speak at their graduation.

TEACHING TOLERANCE INVITATION: TELL THE WORLD WHY YOU TEACH

Why do you teach? We know it's not the hours or the glory. So what is it that drives you and brings you back to the classroom year after year? Let Teaching Tolerance know why you teach by sending in a "Why I Teach" column to Teaching Tolerance. "Why I Teach" submissions should be e-mailed to editor@teachingtolerance.org

Each essay should be:

- an original, previously unpublished piece;
- no longer than 800 words – shorter is better;
- generally personal in tone;
- included in the body of your e-mail (not sent as an attachment); and
- about any education or classroom topic, but not framed as a response to a Teaching Tolerance story or another "Why I Teach" column.

Please include your full name, phone number, and address with your entry. You will be contacted if we plan to publish your entry either in *Teaching Tolerance* magazine or on our blog.

REPORT: THE EDUCATIONAL CRISIS FACING YOUNG MEN OF COLOR

A new report from the College Board cites "overwhelming barriers" for U.S. minority males in becoming educated and productive citizens, proposes national strategies to erase "disparities in educational attainment" and find "new ways of reaching the increasingly diverse U.S. student population," according to *Diverse Issues in Education*. The 42-page report gives a detailed portrait of lagging educational attainment by African-American, Hispanic, Asian-American, Pacific Islander, and Native American males in comparison with other groups and minority women. (Among Asian-Americans, the data trends were disaggregated to show the most vulnerable population are males of Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander descent, in comparison with those of Northeast Asian descent.) At the study's unveiling, Gaston Caperton, president of the College Board, said it describes "young

men who are so far removed from our opportunity culture that they almost have no hope of contributing to our social and our economic growth. As a result, they live in despair, hopelessness, and too often violence and incarceration." We continue to ignore their plight at our own peril, he said. Among the report's many recommendations are that the federal government, foundations, and concerned organizations convene a national policy discussion and fund research to clarify issues that could impact minority male achievement.

Report: <http://www.collegeboard.com/press/releases/210157.html>

REPORT: CHOICE WITHOUT EQUITY: CHARTER SCHOOL SEGREGATION AND THE NEED FOR CIVIL RIGHTS STANDARDS

The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles at UCLA recently issued "Choice Without Equity: Charter School Segregation and the Need for Civil Rights Standards," a nationwide report based on an analysis of Federal government data and an examination of charter schools in 40 states and the District of Columbia, along with several dozen metropolitan areas with large enrollments of charters. The report found that charter schools continue to stratify students by race, class, and possibly language, and are more racially isolated than traditional public schools in virtually every state and large metropolitan area in the country. To view the full report, visit: <http://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu>

REPORT: FOCUSING ON THE ESSENTIALS FOR COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

A new report by ACT, "Focusing on the Essentials for College and Career Readiness," found that 71% of high school teachers and 78% of college professors agree that the level of knowledge and skills needed to be ready for college and a career overlap "a great deal" or "completely." This reinforces a growing consensus among policymakers, educators, advocates, and business leaders, that students must acquire the same skills in high school to succeed in college and the workplace. Now, more than ever, it is imperative that all kids—especially low-income and minority students who

are often left behind—receive a high-quality education. Their success and that of our country's prosperity depend on it.

STUDY: INCREASED EMPHASIS ON ALGEBRA HAS MIXED RESULTS IN CHICAGO SCHOOLS

A push to have more students take algebra before ninth grade to boost college readiness has had mixed results, research shows. In Chicago schools, more students took algebra courses but many received poor grades or failed, and no evidence of increased college readiness was found. Positive effects, however, have been found among middle-school students who took feeder courses such as pre-algebra first. "Simply sticking students in courses without preparing them ahead of time for the class does not seem to work as an intervention," one researcher said. (source: Education Week)

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILM: WAITING FOR SUPERMAN -- Excerpts from a Review:

"Waiting for Superman" is a moving and effective film whose subject may lack the hot-button box office appeal of the director Davis Guggenheim's "An Inconvenient Truth" but is at least a crisis practically everyone agrees actually exists.

Guggenheim begins by admitting his own sliver of guilt: Despite an avowed belief in public education, he chose private school for his own kids. A small risk, maybe, but the information lends even more poignancy to the four urban youths he features here -- black and Latino kids from working-class families whose parents don't have the option of private education and must enter them in lotteries for spots in small schools better than the local "dropout factories."

The film returns to these families occasionally to humanize damning statistics about the decline of our schools, theories about the causes of mediocrity (teachers' unions take most of the blame here, though conflicting

national, state and local rule books don't help) and profiles of hopeful reformers.

Of the latter, Harlem Children Zone's Geoffrey Canada is both the most inspiring and a consistently entertaining speaker -- not only diagnosing schoolhouse ills but admitting he once believed it would take him "two, maybe three years" to straighten out the education system single-handedly before he encountered the obstacles that destroyed countless fix-it efforts before his.

The film isn't exhaustive in its critique -- the enormous downside of standardized testing isn't mentioned, for instance, possibly because testing is how we know just how dramatically today's system is failing -- but it cites plenty of blood-boiling practices, like the \$65million-a-year "Rubber Room" in which bad New York teachers draw full salaries while waiting idly for the school district to prove charges of misconduct.

With glossy, commercial-grade photography and a quick pace, "Waiting for Superman" aims for a wide audience and can't realistically be expected to cover all its material in depth. But many viewers will wish it dug further into the specifics of how great schools succeed and spoke more to concerns that individual success stories are hard to replicate on a nationwide scale. After all, as Guggenheim reminds us, one president after another has claimed to be changing the status quo; it's the specifics where good intentions always seem to stumble."

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Law Focused Education

This site provides good lesson plans and interactive web activities for civic and law-related education. Click on the "Lesson Plan & Curriculum Store" link for a simple search engine that accesses a large database of PDF lessons plans from Law Focused Education, Inc. related to your search. Search by topic and grade level, to narrow your results to make selection easier. Click

on "Online Games & Student Involvement" for interactive games designed for the Middle School level that deal with a wide variety of US Law related topics. Although this site is designed for educators in the state of Texas, most of the resources deal with topics that relate to US civics and Law.

<http://www.texaslre.org/index.html>

African American History Month

includes more than 60 resources related to African American history. See photos and historic places from the civil rights movement. Learn about Frederick Douglass, the Harlem Renaissance, the 369th Infantry, Brown v. Board of Education, and more.

http://www.free.ed.gov/subjects.cfm?subject_id=116

The NAACP: A Century in the Fight for Freedom

features 20 primary documents and resources for learning about the history and achievements of America's oldest and largest civil rights organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Topics include Booker T. Washington, voting rights, Brown v. Board of Education, Marian Anderson singing at the Lincoln Memorial, and more. (Library of Congress)

http://www.free.ed.gov/resource.cfm?resource_id=2151

Exploring Bioethics

This site features modules that help students grapple with ethical issues posed by advances in the life sciences. For Grades 9-12, this curriculum supplement (one of dozens from NIH) focuses on real life cases -- vaccinations, genetic testing, and more. Six inquiry-based modules help students learn to distinguish: What are the ethical questions? The relevant facts? Who could be affected by decisions? (National Institutes of Health)

http://www.free.ed.gov/resource.cfm?resource_id=2147

NIDA for Teens: The Science Behind Drug Abuse

provides teacher guides, videos, quizzes, and games to help teachers integrate the science behind drug abuse into class activities. Students can read the Sara Bellum Blog to learn about the effects of drugs on the brain and body, and then join a discussion with scientists, science writers, public health analysts, and other students. (National Institutes of Health)

http://www.free.ed.gov/resource.cfm?resource_id=2144

Talking Glossary of Genetics

focuses on 256 terms related to genetics. Listen to scientists define and describe each term. See illustrations and 3-D animations of cells, chromosomes, genes, mitosis, protein, and more. Take the Test Your Gene IQ quiz -- read a definition and pick the correct term. (National Institutes of Health)

http://www.free.ed.gov/resource.cfm?resource_id=2145

SOME UPCOMING CONFERENCES

* National Service Learning Conference; March 24-27, 2010: San Jose, California; <http://nslc.nylc.org/>

* National Educator Program SLC International Conference; Beaver Creek, Colorado, April 21-24, 2010

* Education Northwest: From Structure to Instruction: Sharing Best Practices and Lessons Learned From High School Redesign Efforts; Las Vegas, NV; June 28 - 30, 2010

* National Academy Foundation; Philadelphia: Academy Leadership Summit: July 9 - 10, 2010; Annual Institute for Staff Development: July 11 - 13, 2010

* High Schools That Work Staff Development Conference; Louisville, Kentucky; July 14 - July 17, 2010

* National Career Academy Coalition Annual Conference; Austin, Texas; November 6-9, 2010

* National Coalition of Essential Schools Fall Forum; San Francisco,
November 10-13, 2010