

CASN NEWS February 2010

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"To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places -- and there are so many -- where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory." - Howard Zinn, historian (1922 - 2010)

"All of us have a role to play in building an education system that is worthy of our children and ready to help us seize the opportunities and meet the challenges of the 21st century." - President Barack Obama January 6, 2010

In this edition:

- * [Obama Calls for Greater Investment in Education](#)
- * [Proficiency Deadlines May Be Eliminated in Obama Revision of No Child Left Behind](#)
- * [Denver Receives \\$10 M Gates Foundation Grant to Improve Teaching](#)
- * [Connecticut Ed Officials Encourage Schools to End Academic Tracking](#)
- * [Blio May Rival I-Pad as School EReader of Choice](#)

- * [New Jersey to Pilot Requiring Community Service as a Graduation Requirement](#)
- * [Emerging Trend: Netbooks All Around](#)
- * [From the Blogs: Success in Long Beach is Built Over Time](#)
- * [Study: Successful District Policies for ELL Students](#)
- * [New Study Links Cognitive Skills to Economic Wellbeing](#)
- * [Ed Week's Annual Quality Counts Reports Grades States](#)
- * [Report: The Cost of the Achievement Gap in America](#)
- * [Policy Briefs: From Knowledgeworks' Creating the Future of Learning Initiative](#)
- * [Report: Facilitating Information Flow Between K-12, Higher Ed, and the Workforce](#)
- * [Some Funding and Award Opportunities](#)
- * [Upcoming Events](#)

OBAMA CALLS FOR GREATER INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION

In his recent State of the Union address, President Obama called for greater investment in public schools as part of a push to renew the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Obama's fiscal year 2011 budget will seek a 6.2 percent increase to the U.S. Department of Education's budget, including up to \$4 billion more for K-12 education. Of the increase, \$1.35 billion will be aimed at extending Race to the Top (RttT) grants to school districts, with the goal of expanding RttT reform priorities -- among them turning around failing schools and increasing the supply of effective teachers -- to all 50 states. The president said that the RttT initiative had "broken through the stalemate between left and right." Its idea, Mr. Obama explained, is "simple": "Instead of rewarding failure, we only reward success. Instead of funding the status quo, we only invest in reform -- reform that raises student achievement, inspires students to excel in math and science, and turns around failing schools that steal the future of too many young Americans, from rural communities to inner cities."

PROFICIENCY DEADLINES MAY BE ELIMINATED UNDER OBAMA REVISION OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

President Barack Obama hopes to eliminate the 2014 deadline under No Child Left Behind that requires all students to be proficient or advanced in math and reading, according to a New York Times article. Obama's proposed overhaul of the federal law maintains a commitment to closing achievement gaps and improving teacher quality. It does, however, include changes in

the way schools are assessed and financed, and other aspects of the law opposed by many educators and teachers unions.

DENVER RECEIVES TEN MILLION DOLLAR GATES GRANT TO IMPROVE TEACHING

Denver Public Schools received a three-year, \$10 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to develop a system for evaluating teachers. District officials said they plan to use the money to create a research-based definition of effective teaching, develop teacher-assessment tools and targeted professional development, and come up with new ways to reward the most effective teachers. The district was among those that applied for but did not win a first round of teacher-improvement grants awarded in November by the foundation.

CONNECTICUT ED OFFICIALS ENCOURAGE SCHOOLS TO END ACADEMIC TRACKING

Connecticut education officials adopted a policy to discourage the use of academic tracking in schools, saying that the practice has a negative effect on the academic success of minority and low-income students, who are often placed in less challenging classes. The policy is not binding on districts, but it does call on schools that use tracking to inform parents of students on low tracks of their children's progress, and it requires schools to file annual reports detailing their tracking systems.

BLIO MAY RIVAL APPLE'S IPAD AS SCHOOL EREADER OF CHOICE

Blio -- a free e-reader program due out this month -- may rival Apple's iPad as an attractive option for students and schools. Blio can be used on any computer or portable device and has the ability to support the original full-color font, layout and graphics of any book as well as embedded multimedia, according to its creators. The program also features text-to-speech technology that is useful for language learners and that does not require visually impaired users to navigate through text menus to activate the feature.

NEW JERSEY TO PILOT REQUIRING COMMUNITY SERVICE AS GRADUATION REQUIREMENT

New Jersey is studying whether to require high-school students to participate in community service activities to graduate. A pilot program set to begin this fall at 15 high schools across the state will require incoming freshmen to complete 20 hours of service -- in or out of school -- over four years. An official at one school that has required community service as part

of the high-school social studies curriculum says the activities have been beneficial for students. "It's changed our environment," she said.

EMERGING TREND: NETBOOKS ALL AROUND

Mobile devices are increasingly playing a role in students' lives as more and more schools look to transform education through technology and help bridge the "digital divide" by supplying core learning tools to students in order to ensure that all students are given an equal chance for success. And, increasingly, netbooks are helping to make such efforts feasible. One school that's in the midst of such an effort is Missouri-based North Kansas City Schools. With four high schools and a total of 18,000 students, the district kicked off its 1:1 initiative two years ago in an effort to equip all 5,600 of its high school students with netbooks.

FROM THE BLOGS: SUCCESS IN LONG BEACH IS BUILT OVER TIME

Broad Prize recipient Long Beach Unified School District hasn't achieved success by "flitting from reform to reform or looking for silver bullets," writes Anne O'Brien on the Public School Insights blog. Instead, it has spent the past two decades building on the same educational strategies, focusing on data, community buy-in, and staff development. In an interview, Long Beach Superintendent Christopher Steinhauser, who has spent the past 28 years in the district in various capacities, explains that their reform "journey" was prompted in 1992 by the closure of the city's naval base, huge layoffs by local employer McDonnell Douglas, and civil unrest in neighboring Los Angeles. The school system was in turmoil, with students pulling out. In response, the school board implemented K-8 uniforms, ended social promotion, introduced a third-grade reading initiative, and adopted a policy in which eighth-graders who had two or more Fs could not go on to high school. The system also launched a major partnership with its local junior college and local university. All of these measures caught on, says Steinhauser, with the result that Long Beach has huge accountability at the elementary level and one of the most rigorous promotion policies in California. "Everything has just built up over the years," he explains. "We see ourselves as a continuous improvement district. We look at the data every year, target certain issues, and build upon those issues."

STUDY: SUCCESSFUL DISTRICT POLICIES FOR ELL STUDENTS

Four U.S. school districts with successful policies for English Language Learner (ELL) students have been identified. Successful districts were identified in a study conducted by the Council of Great City Schools, in which

four districts -- San Francisco, Dallas, New York City, and St. Paul, Minn. -- demonstrated significantly improved achievement amongst ELL students on state reading exams taken between 2002 and 2008. Two other cities showing little or no improvement with ELL students were described in the study, though the city names were not identified. The practices of these lower-achieving cities were compared with the four successful school districts. The study details the practices championed by the four successful districts overall.

NEW STUDY LINKS COGNITIVE SKILLS TO ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

A new study from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), "The High Cost of Low Educational Performance," links cognitive skills to economic well-being. Approximately 19% of U.S. students score below the minimum level of 400 on the Programme for International Student Achievement. Raising those scores to 400, OECD projects, would add \$72 trillion to the U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) over the lifetime of children born in 2010. <http://www.all4ed.org/events/WebinarHighCostLowEducationalPerformance011910>

ED WEEK'S ANNUAL QUALITY COUNTS REPORT GRADES STATES

In ranking key education indicators, the publication Education Week gave Massachusetts the only A on its Chance-for-Success Index, while Connecticut, New Hampshire and New Jersey each earned an A-minus. The country as a whole earned a C-plus in the same category. Mississippi, Nevada and New Mexico each received a D-plus. The annual Quality Counts report looks at data from a number of key areas and grades states on their education policies and performance in four areas: the Chance-for-Success Index; standards, testing and accountability; teachers; and education finance. In ranking key education indicators, the publication Education Week gave Massachusetts the only A on its Chance-for-Success Index, while Connecticut, New Hampshire and New Jersey each earned an A-minus. The country as a whole earned a C-plus in the same category. Mississippi, Nevada and New Mexico each received a D-plus. The annual Quality Counts report looks at data from a number of key areas and grades states on their education policies and performance in four areas: the Chance-for-Success Index; standards, testing and accountability; teachers; and education finance. *(NOTE: Access to the Quality Counts report requires a subscription to Ed Week; however, many school and District administrators often subscribe.)*

REPORT: THE ECONOMIC COST OF THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN AMERICA

A 2009 McKinsey and Company report found that closing the achievement gap between low-income students and others would have boosted U.S. GDP

in 2008 by \$400 billion to \$670 billion -- or 3 to 5 percent. http://www.mckinsey.com/clientservice/Social_Sector/our_practices/Education/Knowledge_Highlights/Economic_impact.aspx

POLICY BRIEFS FROM KNOWLEDGEWORKS' CREATING THE FUTURE OF LEARNING INITIATIVE

As part of its 2020 Forecast: Creating the Future of Learning initiative, the KnowledgeWorks foundation has released a series of policy briefs to address the reality now facing traditional education institutions. The most dynamic innovations in education will probably occur outside these institutions, and bottom-up developments will have to fuse with their traditional, top-down hierarchies. The first brief in the series, "Crafting Policy for Emerging Educational Futures," examines this issue in light of two drivers of change: The first driver is our present context, in which bio-engineering promises cognitive and physical enhancement at the same time that our biological, ecological, and built environments show signs of stress; the second driver is the current economy, where large-scale production is shifting to bottom-up design and manufacturing. The second policy brief, "Amplified Policymaking," explores skills required to handle the ubiquity of data, along with implications for using those skills to extend individual and organizational capacity. The third brief, "Building Policy Platforms for Resilience," calls on policymakers to bring new strategies in response to disruptions in our geopolitical, economic, environmental, and social systems. The final brief, "Transforming Urban Education: Implications for State Policymakers," explains the process for state-level policymakers interested in transforming urban education. <http://www.kwfdn.org/map/map.aspx>

REPORT: FACILITATING INFO FLOW BETWEEN K-12, HIGHER ED, AND WORKFORCE

College- and career-readiness has become a focal point in American education, but a new report by Education Sector finds that most high school accountability systems fail to recognize college- and career-ready goals. Many districts rate schools solely on graduation rates and on student scores on basic-skills tests in a single year. Some states have added end-of-course or graduation exams, but these are often stymied by lawsuits or devalued by near-universal pass rates after re-takes and alternate routes. The report looks at various measures some states are taking to remedy this by building "powerful new data systems that track student progress after high school into the workforce and college, allowing vital information to flow between K-12, higher education, and workforce information systems." Sixteen states are already reporting the college remediation needs of public high school graduates, according to the study, and can calculate the percentage of

students in a specific high school's graduating class in need of remedial coursework in college, who drops out of college, who earns successful grade point averages their freshman year, and much more. The report also suggests that states calculate the earnings of graduates who enter the workforce, broken down by occupation and industry sector.

http://www.educationsector.org/research/research_show.htm?doc_id=1134127

A BIT OF DATA FROM ACT - HOW PREPARED ARE OUR STUDENTS?

Findings in the ACT Profile Report - 2009, which measures how well prepared high school graduates are for college, include:

* Of students tested, 58% are not ready for college-level algebra.

... 40% could not solve multistep problems involving fractions and percentages.

... 72% are not ready for college-level biology.

... 40% could not predict the results of an additional trial of a scientific experiment.

... 40% were not able to use the correct adverb or adjective in a sentence, use the correct preposition in a phrase, or make sure that the subject and verb agreed in a sentence.

... 30% were unable to evaluate the contribution that significant details make to the text as a whole.

The ACT standardized test is scored on a scale of 1 to 36, with 36 being the highest possible score. The national average ACT composite score for 2009 high school graduates was 21.1, unchanged from 2008 and 0.2 points higher than in 2005.

SOME WEB RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Several Sites with free access to math lessons:

The PurpleMath Forum - Helping Students Learn Algebra <http://www.purplemath.com/modules/index.htm>

Math With Larry (Zafram) - over 150 short math lessons <http://www.mathwithlarry.com/freemathlessons/free-math-lessons.htm>

Math Mate - hundreds of free math tutorials <http://www.math-mate.com/>

No Impact

Check out Green Changemakers for five downloadable no impact curriculum modules.

<http://green-changemakers.blogspot.com/2010/01/no-impact-curriculum.html>

SOME FUNDING AND AWARD OPPORTUNITIES

Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes

The Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes honors outstanding young leaders who have focused on helping their communities and fellow beings and/or on protecting the health and sustainability of the environment. Maximum award: \$2,500. Eligibility: youth 8-18. Deadline: April 30, 2010. <http://www.barronprize.org/>

Earth Island Institute: Youth Award for Outstanding Activism in Environmental and Social Justice

The Earth Island Institute Brower Youth Award recognizes young people for their outstanding activism and achievements in the fields of environmental and social justice advocacy. Maximum award: \$3,000; a trip to San Francisco for the awards ceremony, October 19, 2010; and a wilderness camping trip. Eligibility: youth activists ages 13-22. Deadline: May 15, 2010. <http://www.broweryouthawards.org/article.php?list=type&type=54>

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth

The NEA Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth program funds projects that help children and youth acquire appreciation, knowledge, and understanding of and skills in the arts. Projects must provide participatory learning and engagement of students with skilled artists, teachers, and excellent art, and ensure the application of national, state, or local arts education standards. Maximum award: \$150,000. Eligibility: school-based or community-based projects. Deadline: June 10, 2010. <http://www.arts.gov/grants/apply/GAP11/LITA.html>

Actuarial Foundation Advancing Student Achievement Grants

The Actuarial Foundation Advancing Student Achievement grant program brings together actuaries and educators in local classrooms with the belief that interaction with real-world mentors will boost student interest and achievement in math. The Actuarial Foundation can provide a local network of actuaries ready to participate, as well as suggestions on how to integrate math concepts from the workplace into the classroom. Schools applying for grants will be given wide latitude in designing programs that enhance

learning and create a "love of math" in each student. Maximum award: varies. Eligibility: All schools willing to undertake a math-mentoring program involving local actuaries as volunteers are eligible. However, in order for a program to be viable, there must be a sufficient population of volunteer actuaries within easy traveling distance to make a regular program possible. Deadline: None, but applications should be received at least one or two months prior to proposed start date. http://www.actuarialfoundation.org/programs/for_teachers.shtml

Intel Schools of Distinction Awards

Know a school that demonstrates 21st century teaching and learning environments that promote excellence in math and science? Suggest the school Enter the 2010 Intel Schools of Distinction Awards and the school could win up to \$25,000. Eighteen finalists will win \$5,000 and a trip to Washington, D.C. Six winners selected from the eighteen finalists will receive an additional \$5,000 from the Intel Foundation and more than \$100,000 in products and services from the program award sponsors.

Categories:

There are two categories for this year's Intel Schools of Distinction award: mathematics and science. A school may apply for the Intel School of Distinction in either category.

Criteria for Evaluation:

Programs for either math or science should be designed to ensure high levels of achievement for all students in all program areas. Exemplary applicants will be selected by examining the extent to which they represent the intersection of the benchmarks laid out by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills in their ICT literacy maps for each content area (math and science) and national content standards for that content area. In addition, judges will take into consideration for each school their:

- Professional development program(s)
- Leadership model
- Level of community involvement

- Level of collaboration/teamwork
- Capacity to scale and sustain
- Use of rich digital content
- Level of student achievement
- A variety of instructional strategies incorporating such areas as critical thinking skills, hands-on experiences, and project-based learning

http://www.intel.com/education/schoolsofdistinction/application.htm?iid=&utm_source=streamsend&utm_medium=email&utm_content=8574231&utm_campaign=January%202010%20LEED%20Links

UPCOMING EVENTS

From Structure to Instruction: Sharing Best Practices and Lessons Learned From High School Redesign

Education Northwest is presenting the third annual institute, From Structure to Instruction: Sharing Best Practices and Lessons Learned From High School Redesign. This institute will be June 28–30, 2010 at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The 2009 National Superintendent of the Year, Dr. Beverly Hall of Atlanta Public Schools, deliver the keynote address.

Registration information is available at <http://educationnorthwest.org>

Early Bird registration continues through April 15.

For more information, contact: Suzanne Hay - Suzanne.Hay@educationnorthwest.org

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