

CASN News - March 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, smaller learning communities and/or small schools. We also work to engage communities with schools; to support significant learning; and to create high performance, college and career-going cultures.

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"Attempting to harness real change that is being pulled by intention, not pushed by prediction, is so complex that its understandings can only be constructed in the conversations among co-leaders in a learning community... .. It is the participation processes that create the meaning and the understandings (the reality) to which people then commit themselves. Without these participatory opportunities, commitment is not possible, only obedience."

-Linda Lambert, The Constructivist

Leader

"Students learn what they care about . . . ,' Stanford Ericksen has said, but Goethe knew something else: 'In all things we learn only from those we love.' Add to that Emerson's

declaration: 'the secret of education lies in respecting the pupil.' and we have a formula something like this: 'Students learn what they care about, from people they care about and who, they know, care about them...'

Barbara Harrell Carson, 1996, Thirty Years of Stories

"The lasting measure of good teaching is what the individual student learns and carries away."
Barbara Harrell Carson, 1996, Thirty Years of Stories

HIGH SCHOOL FEDERAL LEGISLATION WATCH: STRIVING READERS AND PASS

Recently U.S. Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL) & Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) introduced legislation that would provide grants to every state for reading and comprehension programs to meet the needs of students in grades four through twelve. Called the Striving Readers Act, the legislation would help ensure that students who are struggling to read and write at grade level receive the literacy interventions they need to succeed in school & graduate from high school with a meaningful diploma.

The Striving Readers Act comes on the heels of another high school reform bill, S. 611, the Pathways for All Students to Succeed (PASS) Act, that Senator Murray introduced earlier this month. The PASS Act would help to increase graduation rates by providing critical resources including literacy and math coaches, additional academic and career counselors, and grants to fund innovative reform in high schools across the country.

"Given ...that two out of every three high school seniors read below grade level on the Nation's Report Card, it is clear that America's older students need help improving their reading and writing skills," Murray said. "The Striving Readers Act, combined with the PASS Act that I introduced earlier this month, are an important one-two punch that will help middle and high school students read and write better, and will also help keep students in school and on track to receive their high school diploma."

Sessions...said, "The Striving Readers Act marks an important and urgent investment in the older students. We must not risk squandering the investments Congress has already made through the important Reading First program for younger students. But with 70 percent of our middle and high school students reading below grade level, we know we must continue our support with ongoing programs that reflect the needs of the

older student for more advanced vocabulary and comprehension skills. All students, throughout their K-12 educational experience, deserve adequate support to ensure on-time graduation with appropriate skills and knowledge that meet the demands of the 21st century."

To view Senator Sessions' press release, see:

<http://sessions.senate.gov/pressapp/record.cfm?id=269567>

To view Senator Murray's press release on the PASS Act, see:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=269357> .

BY THE NUMBERS - ASIANS & OTHER MINORITIES ON CAMPUS

Across the U.S., Asian enrollment in postsecondary schools is at an all-time high. Asian Americans make up less than 5% of the U.S. population, but typically make up 10-30% of students at some of the nation's best colleges.

At the University of California, Asians make up the largest single ethnic

group, 37%, at its nine undergraduate campuses. For the last two years,

the percentage of Asian freshmen at the University of California, Berkeley,

has been at a record high of 46%. At Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Asians make up 27% of the undergraduate population. At Stanford & Carnegie Mellon universities, Asians make up 24% of the undergraduate population. At Yale, that number is 14% & at Princeton, 13%.

About 95% of Asian freshmen come from a family in which one or both parents were born outside the U.S.

By comparison, there were only 100 black freshmen in a class of 4,809 at the University of California at Los Angeles, the lowest number in more than three decades. At Berkeley, 3.6% of freshmen are black, barely equal to the statewide proportion (Source: New York Times)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/07/education/edlife/07asian.html?ex=1325826000&en=03217915e15e2971&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>

STUDIES SAY NO CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE THAT HOMEWORK INCREASES STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT;

DROPOUT RATE RELATIVELY STEADY

A new Center for Public Education review of homework research says there is no conclusive evidence that homework "increases student achievement across the board." A new National Center for Education Statistics analysis found the dropout rate stood at about 4.7% in 2004, down from 6.1% in 1972, but that the rate has remained relatively steady since 1990.

NEW NATIONAL AND STATE COLLEGE ACCESS MARKETING CAMPAIGNS LAUNCHED

The American Council on Education, in partnership with Lumina Foundation for Education and the Ad Council, recently launched the national "KnowHow2Go" campaign. The campaign targets 8th-10th grade students with the message that there are steps they need to take if they want to go to college. Public service announcements and posters direct students to the <http://www.KnowHow2Go.org> website for practical advice on preparing and planning for college and links to resources in the state in which they live.

Also, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid launched a national campaign called "Only a Dream." It targets students, especially minority and first-generation students, who need assistance to pay for college and provides information about the availability of financial aid. For more information, go to <http://federalstudentaid.ed.gov/lajwt.html>.

Another college access marketing initiative that recently began is Massachusetts' "Ready Set Go" campaign . Created by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education and Department of Education, this campaign's website lists eight steps for students to take to get ready for college, as well as links to resources and information necessary to pay for college. For information, go to <http://www.ReadySetGotoCollege.com>.

GOVERNMENT, PARENTS FUEL GROWTH OF CHINESE IMMERSION SCHOOLS

From Alaska to Massachusetts, the country's 12 Chinese immersion schools are filling up before they even find locations. The U.S. government last year handed out \$9 million to bolster Chinese language courses, but "the major force behind it is

coming from parents who don't speak Chinese and want their children to be exposed to it," said Zhining Chin, a coordinator at a Minnesota public Chinese immersion school set to open in September.

INCREASING NUMBER OF 8TH GRADERS TAKE ALGEBRA OR MORE ADVANCED MATH

Experts say the trend toward early algebra is driven by a desire to open the door for higher learning in math and science. Nationally, more than 42% of eighth-graders now take algebra or more advanced math, up from 27% in 2000, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress. (source: Washington Post, Houston Chronicle)

A SAMPLING OF REPORTS, RESEARCH, & WEB SITES OF INTEREST

Emerging Technologies Expected to be Relevant in Teaching & Learning

The 2007 Horizon Report, resulting from an ongoing collaboration between The New Media Consortium and the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative (ELI), highlight technologies that research suggests will become very important to higher education over the next one to five years. (but is also an interesting read for secondary educators.)

In one year or less, the Report predicts that user-created content and social networking will be significant in higher education. Easy-to-use Web 2.0 technologies allow students to become creators, as well as consumers, of content. YouTube, Google Video, Flickr, and Ourmedia are examples of sites that allow everyday citizens to post images, videos, and audio clips to the Internet. The Web 2.0 technologies also allowed the expansion of social networking sites, such as MySpace and Facebook. RateMyProfessors gained popularity as students posted their perspectives of professors that were then read by potential students trying to choose their semester schedules. (At the high school level, students use RateMyTeachers) The social networking spaces are comparable for today's teens to the burger joint or the mall where earlier generations gathered to visit.

Within the next two-to-three years, cell phones are expected to become even more prevalent than they are today. The phones are used for so much more than just making calls or sending text messages. They are our address books, file storage devices, cameras, video recorders, & portals to the Internet. Horizon Report predicts that they will be as common & desirable on college campuses as personal computers within the next three years.

Virtual worlds are immersive & scalable 3D environments that allow users to enter through an avatar as if they were physically walking or flying & interact with others in the same virtual space in real time. Examples include *Second Life*, *Active Worlds*, or *There* that combine many of the popular elements of Web 2.0 technologies such as social networking, seamlessly sharing media, & the ability to connect with friends from around the world.

Emerging forms of publication and multi-player educational gaming are expected to become much more important within the next four to five years. It is no longer necessary to follow traditional forms when scholars wish to publish their work. The related challenge is how to protect the integrity of the work at the same time as taking advantage of the increased creativity and collaboration. Blogs and video clips are common examples of the new forms of scholarship that are prevalent in today's world.

Finally, educational games that bring many players together in collaborative or competitive situations, called massively multiplayer online (MMO) games, are generally goal-oriented & frequently tied to a theme. These games are still relatively rare because they are difficult & costly to produce but cost is expected to decrease significantly as open-source MMO gaming engines are further developed. *WorldForge* & *Multiverse* are examples of free or low-cost engines that are expected to reduce the expenses of developing the complex games.

Each of the six technologies is expected to have a significant impact on learning and education within five years. Now, the report concludes, it is up to us to learn about them and determine how we can use their power to help our students

learn. http://www.nmc.org/pdf/2007_Horizon_Report.pdf

Hidden Benefits: The Impact of HS Graduation on Household Wealth

This report demonstrates that if high school dropouts who currently head households in the U.S. had instead earned diplomas, the nation's economy would benefit from an additional \$74 billion in wealth accumulated by families. The wealth gap between high school dropouts and high school graduates is even more severe than the better known income gap. Download at <http://www.all4ed.org/publications/issueBriefs.html>

Urgent but Overlooked: The Literacy Crisis Among Adolescent English Language Learners (February 2007)

America's secondary schools enroll roughly two million English language learners (ELLs), students whose proficiency in spoken and/or written English is not yet strong enough to permit them to succeed in an English-language classroom setting without extra support. These students comprise the fastest-growing segment of the middle and high school population, with enrollments soaring in almost every part of the country. However, while ELLs may be growing in numbers, in other respects they are being left behind—as a group, they are among the country's lowest-performing students, scoring far below the national average on the reading portion of the National Assessment of Educational Progress. This Issue Brief reviews the existing research on literacy instruction for adolescent ELLs and describes a number of challenges and priorities for policymakers to consider. Download at <http://www.all4ed.org/publications/issueBriefs.html>

Healthier and Wealthier: Decreasing Health Care Costs by Increasing Educational Attainment (November 2006)

Healthier and Wealthier argues that higher educational attainment improves a student's future income, occupational status, and social prestige, all of which contributes to improved individual health. The brief cites several reasons why, including the fact that Americans with higher educational attainment have more insurance coverage, individuals who lack health insurance receive less medical care and have poorer health outcomes, and lower education levels generally lead to occupations with greater health hazards. Download at

<http://www.all4ed.org/publications/issueBriefs.html>

Demography as Destiny: How America Can Build a Better Future

The education gap that exists between white and minority students in the United States is a byproduct of both economic disparity and inequity. Lack of resources and fewer qualified teachers are just two factors that contribute to the problem.

Currently, only about 70 percent of all American high school students graduate in the expected four years, but the figures are even bleaker for minority populations. As minority populations become larger as a percentage of the population, and if their low graduation rates remain the same, the national graduation rate will soon begin to fall as a growing number of minority students are left behind. Download at

<http://www.all4ed.org/publications/issueBriefs.html>

Paying Double: Inadequate High Schools and Community College Remediation (August 2006)

Americans are beginning to recognize that many of the nation's high schools are in crisis, as policymakers, business leaders, and celebrities call attention to the country's low graduation rates. But the dropout problem, although severe, is only one indicator of the trouble plaguing the country's secondary schools. Because too many students are not learning the basic skills needed to succeed in college or work while they are in high school, the nation loses more than \$3.7 billion a year. Download at <http://www.all4ed.org/publications/issueBriefs.html>

Research Brief: The High Cost of High School Dropouts: What the Nation Pays for Inadequate High Schools

If the 1.19 million high school dropouts from the Class of 2006 had earned their diplomas instead of dropping out, the U.S. economy would have seen an additional \$309 billion in wages over these students' lifetimes. So says *The High Cost of High School Dropouts: What the Nation Pays for Inadequate High Schools*, a new analysis by the Alliance for Excellent Education that was funded by MetLife Foundation.

According to the brief, more than 12 million students will drop

out of school during the next decade at a cost to the nation of \$3 trillion unless high schools start to graduate their students at higher rates. The complete analysis, as well as a state-by-state breakdown for all fifty states and the District of Columbia, is available at <http://www.all4ed.org/publications/HighCost.pdf>

**** Creating a World Class Education System in Ohio ****

Ohio recently received a smart, ambitious, comprehensive plan that deserves attention nationwide, even though its implementation is the responsibility of Ohio leaders. The Ohio State Board of Education had requested that Achieve, Inc. examine Ohio's K-12 system and report back on how Ohio might become a world leader in education by 2015.

With funding from the Gates Foundation, Achieve commissioned McKinsey & Company to assist with the review and report. The lead author of the report is Sir Michael Barber, former chief education policy advisor to British Prime Minister Tony Blair. The result is a (worth the read) 137 page report. *Creating a World-Class Education System in Ohio* sets two big goals: 1) creating a public system of education as strong as any in the world; and 2) helping Ohio close its persistent academic achievement gaps, which have been largely impervious to earlier school reform efforts.

The Achieve/ McKinsey/Barber report then organizes its reform agenda around three attributes found in world-class systems: *High challenge* -- sets ambitious learning expectations and lays them on the people most responsible for producing such achievement, notably teachers, principals, superintendents, and students themselves.

High support -- provides the necessary resources to, and builds the capabilities of, those same people so that they can deliver the necessary results.

Aligned incentives -- includes both positive incentives and negative consequences for meeting (or failing to meet) those expectations of student achievement.

To reshape Ohio's K-12 education program in line with those

attributes, the report puts forth seven broad recommendations and a host of smaller ones that, if implemented together, would put Ohio squarely on course to educational excellence.

1. Ensure readiness for college and the global economy by raising Ohio's standards and improving assessments. The McKinsey team recommends revising academic standards to make college readiness the overarching goal of the K-12 system. Performance against more rigorous standards would be measured by a streamlined assessment program which, at the secondary level, would include "end of course" exams in core subjects.

2. Empower principals. Central to improving classroom instruction is helping principals better control the instructional leadership of their schools. The report recommends giving them authority over hiring and staffing decisions, school budgets, and instructional choices such as curriculum. In return, they would be accountable for student outcomes, academic achievement chief among them.

3. Set clear expectations for teachers and align evaluation, professional development, rewards and consequences. Teachers, too, would become more accountable. Merit and performance pay, plus professional learning opportunities, would give teachers incentives to hone their skills and to innovate. Chronic underperformers would be objectively evaluated and, if unable to improve, removed from classrooms and school buildings.

4. Support students in meeting high expectations. The state would develop a comprehensive diagnostic process for identifying and addressing pupils' academic and nonacademic needs. Incentives such as college scholarships would help ensure that all students are encouraged to pursue a college-prep curriculum.

5. Ensure that funding is allocated fairly, efficiently, and accountably. Ohio's long-broken school-funding system would be replaced by a state-dominated weighted funding plan wherein per-pupil amounts, adjusted to the specific needs of students, would follow them to the schools they choose to attend. Devolving most financial decision-making to principals, districts would become school-support entities providing critical services such as financial management, transportation, special ed, etc.

Increased transparency would help state policymakers gauge the true price of a world-class education and ensure that taxpayer dollars are well-spent.

6. Increase effectiveness of school and district ratings and improvement. The state would align its annual rating system to reflect performance against federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets. Troubled schools and districts would receive support through a diagnostic system akin to the British "inspectorate" system. Outside school "doctors" would help district and school leaders pinpoint weaknesses and chart a course for improvement, which might include professional development for teachers, targeted interventions, and complete school restructuring.

7. Give all students access to high-quality, publicly-funded school options. The McKinsey team insists that young Ohioans be able to attend any (public) school in the state, including but not limited to district-operated and charter schools. This report echoes recommends shuttering the poorest performing schools; encourages high-performing networks and schools to open; strengthens the accountability of sponsors; and recommends funding parity (including facilities funding) for solid performers.

A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMENTARY:KNOW "HIGH-QUALITY" PROFESSIONAL LEARNING WHEN YOU SEE IT

What do we mean by "high-quality professional learning?" Consider that anything of "high quality" produces optimum results. For example, high-quality consumer goods are reliable and meet rigorous performance standards. The same is true in professional development, writes Hayes Mizell for the National Staff Development Council..... If a school system's professional development does not cause participants to become demonstrably more effective, it is not high quality.

"Professional learning" is about attaining and applying knowledge and skills that enable educators to be more productive. Educators are responsible for cultivating new behaviors and practices that better serve students. When educators seek new experiences and try to use what they've

learned, they create new neural pathways and become more skilled and confident in applying their learning. Professional learning, therefore, is not passive. Effective professional learning requires thought, effort, and practice. Professional learning is not selfish. Professional learning is about increasing the capacities of teachers and school administrators to help students succeed. Educators will always need to understand policies, laws, and administrative procedures, but acquiring this information should never be confused with professional learning."

<http://www.nsd.org/publications/issueDetails.cfm?issueID=193>

NEW ISSUE BRIEFS FROM PATHWAYS TO COLLEGE NETWORK

The Pathways to College Network (PCN) recently developed & published a series of Issue Briefs focusing on five interrelated components of effective school redesign.

Note: Issue Brief Topics Include:

High Expectations: A Key to Success for All Academic

Rigor: At the Heart of College Access and Success

Social Support: An Essential Ingredient to Success

Using Data to Improve Educational Outcomes

Aligning P-12 and Postsecondary Education: Toward a Seamless P-16 Education System

<http://www.pathwaystocollege.net>

All Students College Ready: Findings from the Gates Foundation's Education Work 2000-2006

This report from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation highlights findings from the first seven years of the foundation's education grantmaking efforts to prepare every student for college, work, and citizenship.

<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/nr/downloads/ed/researchevaluation/EducationFindings2000-2006.pdf>

Best Practices and Programs in Career Technical Education

This new web site from the Association for Career & Technical Education highlights career & technical education programs in community colleges, high schools, & career centers across the country that are providing outstanding education, superior technical skills & innovative opportunities to their students.

<http://www.acteonline.org/policy/resources/bpp/>

Teaching and Learning Conditions Improve High School Reform Efforts

This report from the Center for Teaching Quality & North Carolina Business Committee for Education describes how redesigned & early college high schools provide working conditions for teachers that contribute to rigor, relevance & relationships, ensuring that all students develop skills for critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration & innovation.

<http://www.teachingquality.org/pdfs/twc2006hsreform.pdf>

Voices on Student Engagement

The High School Survey on Student Engagement offers teachers and administrators actionable information on school characteristics that shape the student experience. The survey, offered by the Indiana University School of Education, was completed by nearly 300,000 students from high schools across 29 states in 2004, 2005 and 2006. *NOTE: Registration for HSSSE 2006-2007 is now open.*

<http://ceep.indiana.edu/hssse/>

Critical Exposure Launches Web Site

Critical Exposure empowers young people to develop skills as documentary photographers & advocates in order to expose citizens & policymakers to the realities of the current two-tiered education system as seen through the eyes of the students who confront those realities each day. The new web site provides galleries of student work & news of upcoming shows & events.

<http://www.criticalexposure.org/index.php>

Annenberg Institute Launches Equity & Excellence Web Site

Annenberg Institute for School Reform has a new Web site on Understanding Educational Excellence & Equity at Scale. The site aims to address a crucial issue in education reform: different strategies currently in use have created pockets of excellence but have not created equity. They have not lessened large-scale, persistent academic achievement gaps based on race & income. The site provides text-based, audio, & video resources from important voices in education reform to support an ongoing dialogue on the twin goals of educational excellence & equity at scale in urban schools. (NOTE: Many of the links are short

excerpts of articles, with information provided on how to order copies of the Voices of Urban Education publications in which the articles were first published.)

<http://www.Annenberginstitute.org/Equity>

A FEW OPINION PIECES

What Good Is The Core Curriculum If Kids Can't Read?

Curriculum is the engine of our public education system. To a large degree it shapes the allocation of financial resources and time, the preparation and assignment of teachers, and the formulation of academic standards and standardized tests. Despite its importance, curriculum doesn't get much attention from parents, politicians, or the media, writes Ronald A. Wolk for Teacher Magazine.

What is the main purpose of the curriculum? The answer is hardly academic:

If the main purpose is to designate specifically what every student should know, then the standards movement and core curriculum make sense. If the purpose is mainly to provide an essential component in learning to think and solve problems, then the specific knowledge is of secondary importance, and requiring all kids to learn the same things at the same time makes no sense.

Being able to read proficiently is the crucial prerequisite to becoming educated.

Schools fail to teach a great many of our children to read well enough

to understand what they read. Yet they still require students to attend years of courses that they may lack the interest or skill to master.

How reasonable is that?

<http://www.teachermagazine.org/tm/articles/2007/03/01/05pers.h18.html>

Discarding the Deficit Model

University of Miami Professor Beth

Harry, writing with Janette Klingner, an associate professor at the University of Colorado in Educational

Leadership, says the traditional model of putting resources toward

determining whether children have disabilities is often based on

ambiguous criteria and has resulted in the over-representation of black

and Hispanic children in special education classes. The intertwining of

race and perceptions of disability are so deeply embedded in our way of

thinking that many people are not even aware of how one concept

influences the other.

According

to Harry and Klingner, a more progressive model of identifying specific

instructional needs at early ages is beginning to emerge, posing a

challenge to the deficit approach that has prevailed for so long. Many

students have special learning needs, and many

experience
challenges
learning school material. But does this mean they have disabilities?
Can we help students without undermining their self-confidence and
stigmatizing them with a label? Does it matter whether we use the word
disability instead of "need" and "challenge"? Language in itself is not
the problem. What is problematic is the belief system that this
language represents. Why can't we see students' difficulties as "human
variation rather than pathology"?
<http://r.smartbrief.com/resp/gmzscWwHCastbsfCcWgxWMda>

Why NCLB Needs To Be Restructured To Accomplish Its Goals and How To Do It

The foundations upon which the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law's
accountability system is built are flawed, writes Gary Ratner in a new
article in the University of the District of Columbia Law Review. Deep
structural changes are needed to make the legislation effective. "Merely
tweaking the accountability scheme and increasing funding would be like
rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic," said Ratner.

Without changes from

Congress, if school improvements continue at the current rates, it will take 280 more years for the act to meet its goals of bringing every student in the nation to proficiency in reading (as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress.)

Ratner identifies four faulty assumptions that form the foundation of NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress/sanctions-based accountability system, and that doom it to failure:

- (1) Punitive sanctions motivate real educational improvements;
- (2) Problems are local and individual schools have the capacity to address them in isolation;
- (3) Escalating, strategic-planning based, piecemeal sanctions produce necessary change; and
- (4) States have the capacity to turn around failing schools without significant new investments in human and financial resources.

Instead of having the federal government continue to sanction schools for failing to raise test scores, it needs to lead states and localities to make the changes that experienced educators know, and research generally confirms, enhance student learning: systemic improvements in teacher and administrator preparation, training, curriculum level and family support. Then, the Government needs to hold localities and states accountable for implementing those changes,

while continuing to require regular publication of test results for each student subgroup, so that the public can monitor achievement in each school.

<http://www.citizenseffectiveschools.org/udclawreview.pdf>

Playing School in Katrina's Wake

In the 18 months since Hurricane Katrina, the infrastructure of the New Orleans public schools has been systematically dismantled and a new tangle of independently operated educational experiments has been erected in its place. This new structure has taken away community control and community ownership of all but a handful of schools.

Instead, independent charter management organizations - - virtually all from outside the state -- are now running 60 percent of New Orleans schools. There are no more neighborhood boundaries. In a market-based model, parents are considered "customers." And they're supposed to "choose" where to send their kids to school. But since every one of the charter schools was filled to capacity last spring, hundreds of parents have no choice at all for their kids.

Families now returning to New Orleans are bringing 15 to 75 kids per day. Hundreds of kids with disabilities (who are

often turned
away from charter schools) are being placed in the under-
resourced and
over-burdened state-run Recovery School District. It's
their only
choice.

This Balkanized school system is not closing a gap. It's
opening
a chasm,
writes Leigh Dingerson for the Institute for America's
Future. The Bush
Administration was instrumental in creating this new
chasm between the
"haves" and the "have nots" in New Orleans. Rather than
create the
world-class public schools that all New Orleans kids have
deserved for so
long, Dingerson says the Bush Administration invested in
an ideological
experiment to make a pro-privatization, anti-public
education statement.

http://www.tompaine.com/articles/2007/03/05/playing_school_in_katrinass_wake.php

The Case For National Standards In School Reform

In the absence of a clear and consistent set of national
academic
standards for what should be expected of all children, each
state instead
sets its own standards for what kids should know and be
able to do.
Sometimes these standards are high; often they are not.
Either way, they
drive the teaching and learning in America's classrooms
and serve to

perpetuate the nation's educational inequities at a time when we should be working to overcome them.

In this Education Week commentary, Rudy Crew, Paul Vallas, and Michael Casserly advocate for the development of rigorous, uniform national standards for what we expect of all children, starting with the core areas of math and science. National education standards would give all our schools common targets and clarify what we expect teachers to be teaching and what we will hold schools and districts accountable for. National standards would give us, for once, a common definition of what academic proficiency means and what it doesn't mean, rather than having 50 different definitions.

There is little reason to think, as some critics have claimed, that national standards would undermine the nation's tradition of local control of schools. That would remain intact. Besides, the laws of science and math do not change when state lines are crossed, and do not require much local discretion.

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2007/03/05/26crew.h26.html>

A SAMPLING OF SOME "BEST" EDUCATION BLOGS

Fast Company magazine has a regular feature called Best Blogs. In the March issue, the magazine focuses on education blogs. Their three picks are all substantive. See: 2 Cents Worth (<http://www.davidwarlick.com/2cents>)

Moving at the Speed of Creativity (<http://www.speedofcreativity.org>)
and
Joanne Jacobs (<http://www.joannejacobs.com>)

TEXAS INSTRUMENTS (TI) RELEASES FREE SPANISH VERSION OF MATH LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Texas Instruments (TI) has released a Spanish version of its "We All Use Math Every Day" (WAUMED) learning activities. WAUMED is a joint effort between TI and CBS in association with the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) that provides free online classroom activities that connect what children learn in school with the life applications. The math used in each episode of the weekly NUMB3RS series is tied to classroom activities that teachers can use to increase student interest and learning.

The English version of WAUMED was first launched in 2005. Since then, TI reports that about 40,000 teachers have requested its free Teacher Kits and weekly newsletter. The Teacher Kit includes program information, classroom activities, a classroom poster, and a bumper sticker. <http://www.thejournal.com/articles/20219>

A PBL CURRICULUM CHALLENGE: CHALLENGE TO SCIENCE TEACHERS 2006-2007: ENGAGING KIDS IN AN ENERGY DIET

Diane McGrath, a Professor of Educational Computing, Design and Online Learning at Kansas State University and a nationally-known PBL advocate/ writer, recently posted the following curricular challenge to science teachers: "I was inspired to make this challenge by the recent article in the New York Times by Andrew Postman, who, with the help of a science advisor, goes on an "Energy Diet" - to reduce his own energy use at home by 5%. I found it so motivating that I am trying to do this myself, though without a science advisor. I believe that you and your students could do the same thing and at the same time come to understand very important science concepts.

THE CHALLENGE: Can you, using your grade level science material, links given (on the web site/s listed below), any other current information you can find, and your state and national

standards, design a fairly comprehensive PBL unit (more details on the web link) that (a) teaches the science you are supposed to be teaching, (b) does so in a PBL framework, and (c) gets your students to answer the driving question: How can my household lower our energy use by 5%? And what will it cost (in comfort, convenience, and money)?" For more info, see <http://coe.ksu.edu/pbl> OR <http://www.squidoo.com/pbl>

A FEW CURRICULUM WEBSITES OF INTEREST:

Rockets: Educators Guide

Rockets: Educators Guide provides lessons, activities, and information on basic rocket science and rocket history. Lessons include making and flying paper rockets, investigating ways to increase the power of rocket fuels, estimating the altitude a rocket achieves during flight, and demonstrating how rocket liftoff is an application of Newton's Laws of Motion. Emphasis is on hands-on science, prediction, data collection and interpretation, teamwork, and problem solving. (NASA) http://free.ed.gov/resource.cfm?resource_id=1836

National Geographic Homework Help Web Site

What can students do when they are facing an oral report on tigers and don't know where to begin? Try starting with the experts at National Geographic magazine's Homework Help Web site. One of the site's best features is its "One-Stop Research" search tool. Enter a search term, and the tool returns links to related National Geographic maps, photos, articles and video clips all on one page. One-Stop Research is great for looking up info on animals, places, natural phenomena such as earthquakes, and a few ancient cultures. (not so good on historical figures, recent events, etc.)

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/homework/>

Net Frog (Lesson) Grades 7-12

Choose one of two internet frog dissection lessons for an on-line tutorial. Each lesson offers photos, videos, step by step instructions and factual information about a classroom frog dissection from introduction to clean-up. NOTE: Very graphic. Portions of the site require FLASH and Quicktime plug-ins.

<http://frog.edschool.virginia.edu/>

Classroom Notes: The site could be displayed on the LCD projector to teach as a whole-group

lesson or lab. Students who opt out of actual dissection activities may be able to use this site instead.

LaRue Literacy Exercises Grades 6 - 12

These online basic literacy exercises include writing a check, reading a map, filling in a time sheet, and filling out a form. ESL students, transitional Special Ed students, and any student at a basic literacy level would benefit from these illustrated auditory instructions. There are also downloadable printed sheets of the same information. <http://www.mcedservices.com/litex/litex.htm>

Classroom notes: Let your students play and replay the modules (with headphones!) until they believe they understand, then try online or printable exercises for practice and comprehension check. You could also do the activities together with a class on a projector or interactive whiteboard.

Basic Elements of English Grades 5-12

Interactive sites on grammar abound on the Internet, but this one from the University of Calgary is simple without being too simplistic. It contains sections on parts of speech, sentence elements, punctuation, and word use. Word use is particularly effective with older students who sometimes have trouble distinguishing idioms and euphemisms, etc.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/grammar/index.htm>

Classroom Notes: This is a good site for students to work on their personal Achilles heel of grammar. Good for a computer lab lesson, it also affords teachers the opportunity to go over particular skills or parts of speech for each class. This site also links directly to two other Calgary sites that are excellent student/teacher tools: The Writing Guide and A Student's Guide to Presentation of Essays. Also, you may wish to include this link on your teacher web site and as a Favorite on a classroom machine for students to use as a quick reference. When you correct papers, just tell them to see the site to clarify word use issues.

NSTA Learning Center

The recently launched NSTA Learning Center features extensive resources for science teachers at all levels. By joining the site for free, you can access both free and paid content, including journal articles, free web seminars for teachers, and more. Of particular interest are the "science objects," 1-2 hour interactive simulation-based learning experiences for Teachers to enhance their understanding of science concepts. You access these and put them in your "shopping cart" as if online shopping. Some content is not free, but all is clearly labeled.

<http://learningcenter.nsta.org/default.aspx>

Teen Consumer Scrapbook

This site, written by high school students, is packed with good

consumer information for teenagers. There is information about buying goods and services, managing money and credit, buying a car, renting an apartment, and being a smart consumer. It's well written, concisely presented, and easy to navigate. Note: There is also an en espanol version, there is a teacher resources section, and the site is cosponsored by the Washington State Attorney General. <http://www.atg.wa.gov/teenconsumer/>

SOME UPCOMING CONFERENCES:

42d annual National Association of Workforce Improvement (NAWI) Conference, Chicago, April 25-27, 2007.

Learn about best practices from all over the country and network with like-minded professionals who are preparing students for the world of work. For information, see <http://www.nawi.ws>

Check Out the Updated Teacher-to-Teacher Summer Workshop Schedule

The popular Teacher-to-Teacher Summer Workshop Schedule has been expanded again! On July 26 and 27 the U.S. Department of Education and San Diego State University have added a foreign language workshop in San Diego, California. This free workshop, along with several others around the country provides opportunities to learn first-hand from prominent teachers and district officials who share research-based practices they have successfully applied in their schools and classrooms.

** Registration begins on Monday, April 9, 2007, at <https://www.t2tweb.us/workshops/schedule.asp>. Don't Delay - Spaces Fill Up Fast!! *NOTE: We suggest Registering EARLY on April 9th.*

SOME FUNDING AND AWARD OPPORTUNITIES

Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching Each year, the President of the United States recognizes outstanding mathematics and science teachers by bestowing upon them the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and 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; and the U.S. territories (American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and 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 programs. Deadline: May 1, 2007

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

Only One Week Left to Nominate an American Star of Teaching

April 1 marks the last day to honor an inspirational teacher in your community by nominating them as an American Star of Teaching. Just click on <https://www.t2tweb.us/AmStar/About.asp> and share how they have made a positive impact on their students and community.

Listen to a Life Contest

The Listen to a Life Contest is designed to build closer connections between young and old people. To enter the contest, a young person must interview an older person about their hopes and goals, how they achieved their dreams, what obstacles they faced and overcame, and how their dreams may have changed over the years.

Each team consists of a young person (8-18 years old) and an adult that is not a parent who is 50 years or over.

The grand prize winner will receive a Lenovo ThinkCentre computer and a \$500 gift certificate from Books Are Fun. His or her school will also win a \$500 gift certificate from Books Are Fun. Twenty runner-up prizes of \$200 gift certificates from Books Are Fun will also be given.

Entries of 300 words or less must be submitted online by March 31, 2007. <http://www.legacyproject.org/contests/ltal.html>
TIME SENSITIVE

Win a Wireless Lab Sweepstakes

In honor of its fifth anniversary, the Win a Wireless Lab

sweepstakes will include five winners. Through the program, CDW-G and Discovery Education will provide K-12 schools with a technology solution valued at more than \$50,000. Each lab includes 20 laptop computers, a wireless cart and access point, educational software, and training. Deadline: May 1, 2007
<http://cdwg.discoveryeducation.com/>

Staples Foundation for Learning Grants: Grants to Support Job Skills & Education for Disadvantaged Youth

Staples Foundation for Learning Grants provide funding to programs that support or provide job skills and/or education for all people, with a special emphasis on disadvantaged youth. Maximum Award: varies. Eligibility: 501(c)3 organizations. Deadline: April 6, 2007. TIME SENSITIVE
<http://www.staplesfoundation.org/foundapplication.html>

Essay Contest to Promote Study of the Holocaust

The Holland & Knight Charitable Foundation Holocaust Remembrance Project is a national essay contest for high school students designed to encourage and promote the study of the Holocaust. Participation encourages students to think responsibly, be aware of world conditions that undermine human dignity, and make decisions that promote the respect and value inherent in every person. Maximum Award: \$10,000. Eligibility: high school students in the U.S. and Mexico. Deadline: April 30, 2007. <http://holocaust.hklaw.com/>

Grants for Professional Development for Performing Arts Teachers in Rural Communities

The Dana Foundation Rural Arts Initiatives grant funds to professional development programs for performing arts teachers in rural communities in the U.S. Dana supports projects in various stages of development and approach. Maximum Award: \$50,000. Eligibility: Professional artists teaching performing arts in public schools; in-school arts specialists who teach performing arts in public schools. Deadline: June 4, 2007.
<http://www.dana.org/grants/artseducation/rural/guidelinesrural.cfm>

2007 SIGTel Online Learning Award Competition

Do you know of an innovative educator who is advancing online

learning? ISTE's Telelearning Special Interest Group (SIGTel) Online Learning Award (OLA) competition recognizes creative teachers for their pioneering use of telecommunication networks to provide innovative learning opportunities for school-age students K-16.

- * Entries should describe innovative telecomputing learning activities completed between February 2006 and June 2007

- * Educators worldwide are eligible

- * Deadline to submit is March 31, 2007 TIME SENSITIVE!

- * Projects showcased at the National Educational Computing Conference (NECC) in Atlanta, June 24-27, 2007

Candidate nominations can be submitted at

<http://www.iste.org/sigtel>

For questions, please contact: Dr. Yvonne Marie Andrés, SIGTel OLA Award Chairman, yvonne@globalschoolnet.org (760) 635.0001

The Virgin Earth Challenge Prize: Finding a Global Warming Solution

Virgin Group CEO Richard Branson has announced the creation of a \$25 million prize for the first person to come up with a way of removing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. The Virgin Earth Challenge prize will be open to entries for five years, with ideas assessed by a panel of judges that includes Branson, former vice president Al Gore, U.S. climate scientist James Hansen, British environmental writer and former diplomat Crispin Tickell, British scientist and environmentalist James Lovelock, and Australian environmentalist Tim Flannery. The winning solution will be expected to remove one billion metric tons of carbon gases a year from the atmosphere for ten years -- with \$5 million paid at the start of that period and the remaining \$20 million to follow at the end of the ten years. If no winner is identified after five years, the judges can extend the trial period.

According to Flannery, two hundred metric gigatons of carbon have accumulated in the atmosphere since the Industrial Revolution, raising concentrations of the gas by one hundred parts per million. As a result, many scientists predict that the global average temperature will rise by between 1.8 and 4.0 degrees Celsius during this century due to human activity, putting millions at risk from rising sea levels, floods, famines,

and storms.

"Man created the problem and therefore man should solve the problem," said Branson. "Unless we can devise a way of removing [carbon dioxide] from the earth's atmosphere we will lose half of all species on earth, all the coral reefs, one hundred million people will be displaced, farmlands will become deserts, and rain forests wastelands." <http://www.virginearth.com>

CAPCO Science Class Challenge Organization: Consumer Aerosol Products Council

Eligibility: Grades 4-9 teachers

Value: Ten \$1,000 awards and two \$5,000 awards

The purpose of the competition is to encourage students and teachers to learn about the Earth's protective upper ozone layer, CFCs and CFC-free propellants in aerosol products, and the environment by using the provided activities or their own creative methods. Deadline: May 14, 2007 Contact:

<http://nocfcs.org/scc/rulesregs.htm>

California Instructional School Garden Grants (CA only)

The California Instructional School Garden Program promotes, creates, and supports instructional school gardens. The program makes available two different non-competitive grants to support garden-based education. Equipment and Supplies Grants and Professional Development Grants are available to eligible California public schools. View at

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/profile.asp?id=961>

Improving Literacy Through School Libraries Program

(Federal Register: February 16, 2007 [CFDA# 84.364A])

Purpose of Program: The purpose of this program is to improve student reading skills and academic achievement by providing students with increased access to up-to-date school library materials; well-equipped, technologically advanced school library media centers; and well-trained, professionally certified school library media specialists.

Applications Available: February 16, 2007.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: April 2, 2007. TIME SENSITIVE!!

Eligible Applicants: Local educational agencies (LEAs) in which at

least 20 percent of the students served by the LEA are from families with incomes below the poverty line based on the most recent satisfactory data available from the U.S. Census Bureau at the time this notice is published. These data are Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates for school districts for income year 2004. Estimated Range of Awards: \$30,000-\$300,000.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: \$190,000.

Estimated Number of Awards: 100

Additional Information: Applicable regulations, priorities, and other information are available in the Federal Register notice.

Additional information is available online at:

<http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/announcements/2007-1/021607g.ht>

Imaging Tomorrow

Imaging Tomorrow a creative writing and video contest about clean energy for all high-school students in the United States, is seeking submissions for a March 31st deadline. Top entries at the state and regional level go on to the national level, with \$10,000 committed in prizes to the national winners.

Today one of the current and most serious threats facing our world is the question of maintaining and even increasing energy resources that provide the fuel for our economies.

Simultaneously we are facing the economic, environmental, and political consequences of past choices in energy resource use and consumption.

Imagining Tomorrow invites teachers and students to embark on a literary thought experiment, to step outside our current culture and thinking, and imagine a future that might result from the choices we make. Each entry must be related to energy. Energy use, changes in energy use, changes in energy policy, changes in the energy industry, or changes in the environment as a result of energy choices, must be an underlying premise in the work.

If written, stories should be between 1500 and 7500 words,

If video, maximum time is 30 minute running length.

Stories can be about anything; they can range from apocalyptic to pessimistic to optimistic to Utopian. They can take place anywhere in the world, any time from tomorrow to twenty-five

years from now. They can be alternate history stories, based on some change in our recent past that creates an alternative present or future world. They can cut a broad swath dealing with economics, politics or the environment on a global scale, or they can be intensely personal, about one person in one day or one moment. Energy must enter into the story in some way. This need not be the theme of the story, but it should provide a context or backdrop for the story. TIME SENSITIVE!! For more details on entry guidelines, rules, and submission instructions, please visit:

<http://www.itomorrow.theforesightproject.org/index.html>. Any questions should be addressed to itomorrow@theforesightproject.org.

Questbridge, equipping low income, high performing students to apply to competitive colleges

Questbridge, a non-profit organization dedicated to giving high-achieving low-income students resources during the college application process, is accepting applications for its College Prep Program for High School Juniors. Maximum Award: full scholarship to summer program, college admissions counseling, and attendance at college preparatory conferences. Eligibility: Qualified low-income High School Juniors. TIME SENSITIVE!! Deadline: March 31, 2007.

<http://www.questbridge.org/access/collegepreptext/>

Toyota's Professional Development Travel Program to Galapagos Islands

Toyota's Institute of International Education is offering a professional development program for teachers to travel to the Galapagos

Islands. Maximum Award: fully-funded, ten-day trip to the Galapagos. Eligibility: teachers grades 7-12. Deadline: April 23, 2007.

<http://www.iie.org/toyota>

Parent Group of the Year Contest

PTO Today's Parent Group of the Year Contest is an excellent opportunity to showcase your hard work while giving your school the chance to win cash and prizes. Maximum Award: \$8,000. Eligibility: all parent

groups -- PTO, PTA, HSA, PTC, etc.; public & private schools; rural, suburban, & urban schools. Due by: May 31, 2007.
<http://www.ptotoday.com/pgy/>

NEA Foundation Student Achievement Grants

The NEA Foundation Student Achievement Grants provides funds to improve the academic achievement of students in U.S. public schools and public higher education institutions in any subject area(s). The proposed work should engage students in critical thinking and problem solving that deepen their knowledge of standards-based subject matter. The work should also improve students' habits of inquiry, self-directed learning, and critical reflection. Maximum Award: \$5,000. Eligibility: K-12 public school teachers, education support professionals, & higher education faculty & staff at public colleges and universities. Deadline: June 1, 2007.
http://www.neafoundation.org/programs/StudentAchievement_Guidelines.htm

Magnet Schools Assistance Program CFDA
84.165A Grant

(U.S. Department of Education)
<http://www.grants.gov/search/search.do?mode=VIEW&oppId=12919>
Living in a Material World Grants for K-12 Teachers (\$500)
http://www.asminternational.org/content/Foundation/LivingintheMaterialWorld/Living_Material_World.htm