

CASN News March 2010

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RACE TO THE TOP STATE FINALISTS NAMED

The United States Department of Education (USDoE) announced that 15 states and the District of Columbia are finalists for the first round of the \$4 billion Race to the Top (RTTT) competitive grant program. The 16 RTTT finalists are: Colorado, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Tennessee. All of the states chosen as first round finalists will be required send a team of up to five people to make a presentation in defense of their applications to the USDoE on the week of March 15th. Not all first round finalists will win first round funding. First round winners will be announced in early April.

The 25 states that turned in applications and were not chosen as first round finalists will receive information from the USDoE in early April detailing why their application fell short. These 25 states - along with the 10 states that did not apply in the first round - can submit applications for the second round of RTTT funding by June 1st. Second round winners will be announced in early September.

MORE STATES ADD COLLEGE AND CAREER STANDARDS

The number of states with college and career standards has grown, but many fail to create accountability systems for those standards, a new report found. The report by Achieve, a group formed by governors and business leaders, found that 31 states now have standards that meet college and career benchmarks, with eight creating standards as recently as last year. Only 14 of the states, however, conduct assessments to see if those standards are being met, the group said, and only Texas offers full measurements of the benchmarks.

IDAHO MAY OFFER SCHOLARSHIPS TO ENTICE HS STUDENTS TO GRADUATE EARLIER

Idaho legislators are considering a plan to offer financial scholarships to students who graduate from high school up to three years early and enroll in state universities or community colleges. The plan -- taking similar early-graduation initiatives in other states a step further by allowing students to leave high school instead of earning college credit as a high-school student -- is aimed at directing more resources toward students who are gifted or are high-achievers, one state lawmaker said.

POLICY PAVED THE WAY: EARLY COLLEGE INNOVATION IN NORTH CAROLINA

Since 2004, North Carolina has started over 100 innovative high schools, including 70 early college high schools that serve nearly 10,000 students. The schools' outcomes—including grade-to-grade dropout rates and higher scores on end-of-course exams—are better than those of high schools in the state with comparable student compositions. A substantial number of early college students complete college courses before high school graduation. Particularly impressive is that many of these students would typically not be expected to start or complete college, perhaps not even graduate from high school.

Policies Paved the Way, by Joel Vargas, with Jason Quiara, describes how North Carolina has spurred and supported this successful educational innovation, told from the perspective of leaders of early college schools. It is primarily a success story, one that should encourage North Carolina to hold its course and that illustrates how other states can support the creation of better pathways through high school and college. <http://www.jff.org/publications/education/policies-paved-way-early-college-innovat/1012>

METLIFE SURVEY RESULTS: NOT SO GREAT EXPECTATIONS

While most teachers believe in the importance of holding high expectations for students, many appear to fall short of doing so in practice, according to a new MetLife, Inc. nationwide survey of educators. According to the survey, nearly nine in 10 teachers and principals (86% and 89%) believe that setting high expectations for students can have a major impact on student achievement. Eighty-four percent of teachers also said they have confidence in their ability to help all of their students succeed academically.

Somewhat paradoxically (according to the survey), only 36% of teachers and 51% of principals responded that they believe all of their students have the ability to succeed academically. Only about half of the students surveyed, in turn, strongly agreed that all of the teachers in their school want them to succeed.

In another indicator of expectation levels, teachers on average said they believed only about half of their students would attend a two or four-year college after high school. Students' expectations for higher education are much greater, with nearly eight in 10 saying they plan to attend college (85 percent of girls and 73 percent of boys).

The findings on teachers' seemingly mixed messages on expectations for students have generated some heated reactions from educators. "If fully 64% of us think at least some (maybe quite a few) of the students for whom we are responsible don't even have the ability to succeed, then we have just excused ourselves from anything close to our best efforts on their behalf," former Mississippi Teacher of the Year Renee Moore exhorted on her blog, Teach Moore. (source: Teacher Magazine)

BOOK COMMENTARY: A HIGH-PROFILE CHANGE OF HEART

In her latest book, education historian and former federal official Diane Ravitch renounces many of the market-oriented policies that she herself once promoted, according to The Washington Post. "In choosing his education agenda, President Obama sided with the economists and the corporate-style reformers," Ravitch writes in *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*, whose title echoes a seminal 1961 critique of urban planning by Jane Jacobs. Ravitch defends teacher unions, questions the value of standardized test data, and calls the president's support for independently operated charter schools "puzzling." She explains, "I wanted to believe that choice and accountability would produce great results. But over time, I was persuaded by accumulating evidence that the latest reforms were not likely to live up to their promise." She sharply criticizes No Child Left Behind, though The Post writes the initiative "is an easy target because it lost political luster years ago." Ravitch also faults major education philanthropies, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, for relying too heavily on business principles for school improvement. In large part because of her prominence and policy involvement, Ravitch's critique of the prevailing reform ideas in government, philanthropies, and think tanks "is reverberating in the world of education," The Post reports. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/25/AR2010022505543.html>

NOTE: See related op-ed piece by Diane Ravitch in the Los Angeles Times in which Ravitch questions the emphasis on charters, test-driven

accountability, and performance-based pay in Race to the Top and several other major U.S. Department of Ed initiatives and adds that "If our goal is to destroy public education in America, this is precisely the right path." <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/mar/14/opinion/la-oe-ravitch14-2010mar14>

SOME ON-LINE RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Old Man and the Sea

This very beautifully illustrated animated film version of Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* enhances students' comprehension at all skill levels and helps teachers introduce students to the rich and varied elements of this classic story. *NOTE: Turkish subtitles are included in a closed captioning option, which can easily be turned off by clicking on the CC button located directly below the video.*

NOTE: Google Videos are ready for full screen view on a projector or interactive whiteboard and are readily available for download, by simply clicking the "Download" button. The strength of this film being a Google-video is the ease and quality of viewing. The play page has a large video player and caters to all of you multi-taskers who want to keep the current video playing, while you also click on the "Related Videos" links to help you discover and search results for more related films. The Grid View Rollover Function sustains uninterrupted viewing while allowing you to move your mouse over multiple thumbnails of the video. Another feature is the ability to jump directly into the video at the point where captions of interest appear, which is extremely handy during class discussions and to review or reference a particular snippet. You can also choose to sign up for a free Google Account which will allow you to browse and play videos directly from the home page.

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-6079824527240248060#> (or simply "google" "Old Man and the Sea" "animation" "google")

Object of History

A highly interactive Web site, Object of History, takes middle and high school students behind the scenes with curators at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History to explore six objects from the museum's collections. Students watch videos, listen to historians and curators and then create their own online exhibition. Resources include videos, interviews, primary sources, virtual artifacts and lesson plans. <http://www.thinkfinity.org/objectofhistory.aspx>

SOME UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

National Service Learning Conference

March 24-27, 2010 San Jose, CA <http://www.nylc.org/pages-programs-professional-development->

[National_Service_Learning_Conference_Conference?old=6463](http://www.nylc.org/pages-programs-professional-development-National_Service_Learning_Conference_Conference?old=6463)

(or <http://www..org> Search: events)

National Educator Program SLC/Academy Conference

April 21-24, Beaver Creek, CO <http://www.neponline.org>

Model Schools Conference

International Center for Leadership in Education

June 14-17, Orlando, FL <http://www.modelschoolsconference.com>

Education Northwest High School Redesign Institute

June 28-30, Las Vegas, NV <http://www.educationnorthwest.org/news/911>

National Academy Foundation

Academy Leadership Summit July 9 - 10, 2010

Annual Institute for Staff Development July 11-13, 2010

Philadelphia, PA <http://naf.org/naf-conferences>

Buck Institute for Education International PBL Academy

The Buck Institute hosts a series of week-long Project-based Learning Institutes this summer in Novato, CA. Themes include Math Week, Charter and Small Schools Week, Elementary Schools Week, 21st Century Skills

Week, Tech Week, Literacy Week, Social Studies Week, CTE & Service Learning Week, ELL Week June 14 - August 11 Novato, CA

http://www.bie.org/professional_development/2010_international_pbl_academy-schedule/

Southern Regional Education Board High Schools That Work Annual Staff Development Conference: Designing Schools for the Future: Improved Achievement and Graduation Rates

July 14-17, Louisville, KY <http://www.sreb.org/page/1142/summer-conference.html>

SOME FUNDING AND AWARD OPPORTUNITIES

Thoreau Institute Essay Contest

This first annual essay contest from the Thoreau Institute of the Walden Woods Project asks students to respond to Thoreau's famous call to "live deliberately." In 500 words or fewer, students are prompted to consider what their own deliberate lives look and feel like. Essays will be judged in two age categories: 13–16 years and 17-21 years. Due Date: March 31, 2010 <http://www.worldwidewaldens.org/Activity-Guide/Essay-Contest.aspx>

Nominate a Teacher for the 2010 Presidential Awards

The Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching is the highest award a K–12 math or science teacher may receive for outstanding teaching in the U.S. The President officially names up to 108 teachers annually. Awards alternate between elementary and secondary teachers—with elementary teachers eligible in 2010—and are given to teachers from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the outlying territories, and Department of Defense schools. <http://www.paemst.org/> Deadline: May 1, 2010

NASSP/MetLife Foundation: Breakthrough Schools

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the MetLife Foundation are calling for entries in the search for the nation's top "Breakthrough Schools." Applicants should be high-achieving middle or high schools, or schools that are making dramatic improvements in student achievement, whose best practices and outstanding results can inform other schools as they further their own improvement efforts. Honorees will be chosen based on documented success in implementing strategies aligned with the three core areas of NASSP's Breaking Ranks II publication: collaborative leadership; personalization; and curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Maximum award: \$5,000. Eligibility: high-achieving middle and high schools with 40 percent or more students eligible for free and reduced priced meals. Deadline: May 15, 2010. <http://www.principals.org/Awardsandrecognition/BreakthroughSchools.aspx>

Toyota's International Teacher Program

Toyota's International Teacher Program is offering the opportunity for teachers to travel to the Galapagos Islands. Maximum award: fully-funded, 10-day trip to the Galapagos November 20 - December 4, 2010. Eligibility: teachers grades 6-12. Deadline: May 19, 2010. <http://www.toyota4education.com/pmwiki.php?n=Main.WelcomeToTheToyotaInternationalTeacherProgramWiki?from=Main.HomePage>

NEA Foundation: Student Achievement Grants

NEA Foundation Student Achievement Grants aim 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, and higher education faculty and staff at public colleges and universities. Deadline: June 1, 2010. <http://www.neafoundation.org/>

[programs/StudentAchievement_Guidelines.htm](#)

NEA Foundation Learning and Leadership Grants

The NEA Foundation gives grants for high-quality professional development or implementing project-based learning and break-the-mold innovations that raise student achievement. Maximum award: \$2,000. Eligibility: public school teachers, public school support professionals, and faculty and staff in public higher education institutions. Deadline: June 1, 2010. <http://www.neafoundation.org/pages/educators/grant-programs/grant-application/learning-and-leadership/>