

CASN News March 2007

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“All of the evidence indicates that our high schools are no longer a path to opportunity and success, but a barrier to both.....Our current expectations for what our students should learn in school were set fifty years ago to meet the needs of an economy based on manufacturing and agriculture. We now have an economy based on knowledge and technology. Despite the best efforts of many committed educators and administrators, our high schools have simply failed to adapt to this change. As any parent knows, however, our children have not—they are fully immersed in digital culture.....Every student in America should graduate from high school ready for college, career and life. Every child. No exceptions. Whether they are going off to college or into the work force or a combination of the two, it is the responsibility of public education to give our young people the skills, knowledge and preparation for life they need and deserve,”

- Bill Gates in recent speech

UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOLS MOVE TOWARD EXTENDED SCHOOL DAY

The concept of a longer school day is gaining traction across the United States, with some schools/districts expanding the instructional day by as little as 30 minutes to as much as two hours. States desperate to improve scores at an estimated 10,000 failing schools nationwide are beginning to offer money to experiment with the extended school day, but critics worry about the cost and the added workload. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/26/us/26schoolday.html>

SOME CHICAGO SCHOOLS GAIN MORE AUTONOMY

Beginning in Fall 2007, 108 Chicago schools with above-average test scores, attendance rates and fiscal management will get a taste of the academic freedom enjoyed by charter schools, under a program dating to 2005 designed to reward success and not just punish failure. "They are finally recognizing that we are professionals and we know what we are doing," said Ruth Garcia, principal of the successful Zapata Academy, most of whose students come from low-income homes. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/content/education/chi-0703260182mar26,0,789908.story?coll=chi-education-hed>

COLLEGE BOARD AUDITS AP CLASSES FOR ACADEMIC RIGOR

An explosion in AP courses has led the College Board, publisher of college-preparatory exams, to audit each of the estimated 130,000 U.S. Advanced Placement courses, asking teachers to furnish written proof by June 1 that their courses are worthy of the brand. In the 2007-08 school year, only teachers with College Board-approved syllabuses may call their courses AP, likely decreasing the number of classes after years of double-digit growth.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/24/AR2007032401028.html>

LEGISLATION AND POLICY WATCH: HOUSE HOLDS HEARINGS ON NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND
The House Committee on Education and Labor has begun hearings on select issues in No Child Left Behind. These included "Reauthorization: Options for Improving NCLB's Measures of Progress." The Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary & Secondary Education held a hearing on the "Impact on NCLB on English Language Learners." The House & Senate Education Committees held a joint hearing titled "Elementary & Secondary Act Reauthorization: Improving NCLB to Close the Achievement Gap."

NOTE: This is a good time to share your ideas about the reauthorization of NCLB with your federal representatives. Most Washington media sources indicate that there will be more hearings and some initial steps to reauthorizing the legislation are likely during this Congress. However, final action will likely not occur until the 111th Congress.

For more information about NCLB hearings, witnesses, and Web casts, visit the House Education & Labor Committee Web site:
<http://edworkforce.house.gov/committee/hearings.shtml>

SENATE WORKS ON FY2008 BUDGET, OUTLOOK POSITIVE FOR EDUCATION

The full Senate approved the FY2008 Budget Resolution, providing an education funding increase of \$6.1 billion for FY 2008, beginning October 1, 2007. The Budget Resolution is the first step in the funding process. After the House & Senate each pass a budget resolution, they work in a conference committee to resolve any differences. Once a resolution is reached, the Appropriations Committees then begin the formal funding process. NOTE: The Senate-passed Budget Resolution does not delineate specific ed programs.

This proposed increase in Education funding is an excellent sign and we should begin to advocate with our elected federal representative to assure a renewed emphasis on education.

VIEWS OF AFT, NEA ON REAUTHORIZATION OF NCLB GETTING CLOSER

After five years of following separate paths, the two national teachers' unions are now taking a unified position on accountability under the No Child Left Behind Act. The National Education Association has been a staunch critic of the 5-year-old law, maintaining that it is an unfunded mandate with unattainable student-achievement goals. The American Federation of Teachers has argued that the law's goals of raising achievement were sound, but that its policies needed revising.

Last week, when the AFT announced it had endorsed the proposals of the Forum on Educational Accountability, it joined the NEA in a coalition that is lobbying to radically overhaul the NCLB law's accountability measures.

"We don't align on every issue," Edward J. McElroy, the president of the 1.3 million-member AFT, said in an interview last week. "But predominantly we line up on the major issues."

Mr. McElroy said the AFT decided to join the Forum on Educational Accountability after re-evaluating where the coalition of 100-plus groups stood compared with the AFT's positions. He did not outline which of the forum's positions diverged from those of the AFT.

In another alliance that could complicate efforts to reauthorize the NCLB law, more than 50 Republicans, including the No. 2 GOP leader in the House, introduced bills last week that would remove the law's accountability measures and its requirement that states assess students every year.

Mr. McElroy outlined the AFT's position on the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act before a hearing of House and Senate members. In a rare event, the House Education and Labor Committee and the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee held the March 13 joint hearing to discuss changes to the law, which is scheduled to be reauthorized this year.

Other witnesses included NEA President Reg Weaver and representatives of the Council of the Great City Schools, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and a blue-ribbon panel on the NCLB law convened by the Aspen Institute.

While the Senate committee has already held its first NCLB hearings this year, last week's session was the first held by the House committee since Democrats regained control of Congress.

Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., said the House committee, which he chairs, plans many hearings on the law as part of "a bipartisan, comprehensive, and inclusive process."

Much of the discussion centered on how to tinker with the law's central provisions establishing a federal accountability system for educational performance, seeking to improve the quality of teachers, and setting a goal that all students be proficient in reading and mathematics by the end of the 2013-14 school year.
Tinkering or Rewriting?

In summing up the witnesses' recommendations, Rep. Michael Castle, R-Del., said that "No Child Left Behind is fundamentally very good for education, but may need some changes."

That may have summarized the tenor of last week's hearing, but Rep. Peter Hoekstra, R-Mich., a member of the panel, said the law gives the federal government too much control over state instructional and assessment policies.

Later in the week, as he indicated he would earlier this month, Rep. Hoekstra unveiled a bill that would give states wide latitude in setting the achievement goals for students and the accountability systems to measure progress toward those goals.

Rep. Roy Blunt, the Republican whip, was among the 52 members who have endorsed Rep. Hoekstra's bill, and Sens. John Cornyn, R-Texas, and Jim DeMint, R-S.C., have introduced a similar bill in the Senate.

Although the AFT's policy shift on NCLB is subtle, members of the Forum on Educational Accountability said it is significant. AFT officials attended organizational meetings for the forum in its planning stages three years ago, but decided not to join the group early in the process, said Bruce Hunter, a chief lobbyist for the American Association of School Administrators, who was

instrumental in the formation of the forum.

“They are looking at different ways of measuring progress,” Mr. Hunter said of the AFT. “I think it shows that their members have weighed in with them, really clearly.”

The change is noteworthy, another observer said, because the AFT has endorsed standards-based accountability measures for more than a decade, dating back to the leadership of the late Albert Shanker. But there are no other signs that the AFT is changing its positions on that policy approach, added Joseph P. Viteritti, a professor of public policy at Hunter College, City University of New York.

“I think we have to be careful not to overread this,” Mr. Viteritti said. “This is a significant development, but we’re not sure what it means yet.”

At the House-Senate education committees’ hearing, Mr. McElroy and Mr. Weaver offered similar criticisms of the NCLB’s accountability system.

The system “misidentifies as failing thousands of schools that are making real progress,” Mr. McElroy told the lawmakers. “Students, parents, teachers, and communities know that their schools are making solid academic progress, yet they’re told that they’re not making the grade. It’s devastating and demoralizing.”

Mr. Weaver also characterized the NCLB accountability measures as unfair. In his written testimony, he urged Congress to allow states to adopt their own accountability systems that would use several different ways to determine student progress.

Under the NCLB accountability system, states must assess students in reading and mathematics in grades 3-8 and at least once in high schools. To make adequate yearly progress, districts and schools must meet achievement targets for all students and various subgroups according to race, ethnicity, demographics, and students’ special needs.

The national teachers’ unions haven’t always been so close on the wide-ranging federal law, an overhaul of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

The 3.2 million-member NEA has been highly critical of the law. In 2005, the NEA filed a federal lawsuit seeking to have the law declared invalid because, the suit contended, it violated its own prohibition against forcing state and local officials to spend money for its implementation.

A U.S. District Court judge in Detroit later dismissed the case, and the lawsuit is on appeal.

The AFT, by contrast, has generally supported the law. It launched a campaign in 2005 outlining ways to change the law to make it an effective way to spur increased student achievement. The campaign includes a well-read Web log called "Let's Get it Right."

Coalition-Building

In his statement to the committees, Mr. Weaver of the NEA outlined many of the goals of the Forum on Educational Accountability. The coalition argues that accountability decisions should be made on the basis of a variety of test scores and other measures, such as teacher grades and portfolios of students' work. It also suggests that schools should define how they would meet targets for improving the quality of their teachers and expanding the involvement of parents.

The NEA, the AASA, and the National Center for Fair & Open Testing, or FairTest, helped start the forum three years ago. Mr. Hunter said AFT representatives stopped attending the meetings because they supported the law's system of making accountability decisions based on test scores. Other members of the forum include the National School Boards Association, the Coalition of Essential Schools, and the National PTA. The coalition also has members from a variety of civil rights and religious advocacy organizations.

HOW WELL HAS NCLB WORKED? HOW DO WE GET THE REVISIONS WE WANT?

Phi Delta Kappa's 2006 Summit on Public Education opened with a stimulating panel discussion on the hottest topic in education: NCLB. Anne C. Lewis reports on the panel's views and how they were received by the conferees in the subsequent breakout sessions.

LOOK south from the corner of the Capitol Hilton in Washington, D.C., and the front door of the White House is squarely in the center of your view. Look north, and you can see a corner of the National Education Association building on 16th Street. Around the corner is the entrance to the offices of the Washington Post. Glance from side to side, and you see a stretch of the infamous K Street, the land of the lobbyists. One block west and one south is a stop for the Blue Line Metro, which can take you directly to the middle of the House of Representatives buildings.

This hotel has always been a strategic and sometimes history-making place. In one of its ballrooms, the late Terry Sanford, then governor of and later senator from North Carolina, announced an unusual compact for education: the agreement to form the Education Commission of the States. Before other venues closer to the Capitol were built, this was a favorite site for the conferences of education groups, the release of major reports, and no doubt some deal making in the lobby bar.

It was a fitting place for Phi Delta Kappa International to hold its 2006 Summit on

Public Education, the formal culmination of a year of events celebrating the centennial of PDK, the professional association in education. In this cradle of policy making, politics, and media, PDK appropriately turned its attention to one of the most extraordinary happenings in education policy of the last century -- the No Child Left Behind Act. The law was conceived by the White House and passed by Congress on a nonpartisan basis. Since it first took effect in 2002, it has been the focus of intense lobbying by many groups wanting to change it. Now, after more than four years, it stands accused of not doing very much, very fast, for the children attending schools just a few blocks from the hotel, the kind of struggling and often neglected students the law is intended to help the most. This juxtaposition of good intentions and stark realities characterized much of the discussion, both formal and informal, at the Summit. A panel of national policy experts, prodded and kept on track by questions from John Merrow, education correspondent for PBS' "NewsHour," opened the conversations with a mixture of praise, some misgivings, and a few suggestions for changes in a law that is not going to go away. The panelists were a lot nicer than many in the audience wanted them to be. In breakout sessions focused on what the panelists had said, PDK members and others voiced frustration at how the law is playing out in their classrooms, school districts, and higher education institutions.

The panelists, for example, counted the greater attention paid to children in special education as a plus in the law. That's true, participants said in the small-group discussions, but the law's accountability provisions work against the best interests of these children. Panel member Sandy Kress, an architect of the legislation for President Bush and former school board president in Dallas, said passionately that the law allows no excuses for the achievement gap. "I think part of what gets No Child Left Behind into trouble is, it means [what it says]. There are teeth to it, more teeth to it than anywhere in any previous act of legislation." Those in the small-group discussions agreed but argued that the accountability provisions are in need of a good cleaning.

The panelists welcomed the fact that ensuring good teachers for classrooms in high-poverty schools was on the table. But even the panelists did not equate the law's definition of "highly qualified" with real competence, and Summit participants, many of them teachers, decried the law's effect on excellent teachers who had been made to feel that they are failures because of NCLB's statistical definition of adequate yearly progress (AYP).

The panelists and Summit participants certainly agreed that NCLB has provoked a national discussion about public education and has made public the significant achievement gap among the nation's students. Yet many worried that the conversation was too narrowly focused on test scores. Missing from all the attention to student outcomes are a number of equally important roles for schools, such as developing critical thinkers and future citizens.

The Summit's emphasis on NCLB had a clear purpose -- to stimulate PDK members to become involved in the reauthorization process. Although final passage of a revised NCLB may be delayed because of politics, Congress will surely begin its discussions in 2007. The new committee leadership in the House

and Senate anticipates little change in the core provisions of NCLB, but it should be pointed out that the law, itself a reauthorization of the 40-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act, practically "sneaked" onto the books late in 2001. The public had scarcely any opportunity to help shape it.

Even if the panel discussion of NCLB at the PDK Summit lacked controversy, it did cover issues that might never have surfaced in such a forum without the law's provoking attention to them. In that sense, the panel began an important process for PDK members and for all Americans.

What's Good, What Needs Changing

There has been meaningful progress in improving the academic scores of children of color since NCLB was passed, Kress pointed out. It was the importance of understanding the educational plight of these children that convinced the Council of the Great City Schools to support NCLB when "a lot of people didn't expect that a group like ours . . . would actually stand up and be in favor of a piece of legislation like this," according to panelist Michael Casserly, the Council's president. Even though most of the schools designated as "needing improvement" under the law are in urban districts, the Council would support the legislation again if it came up for another vote tomorrow, he said, explaining: We thought the law, at the time and even still, was important because it focused on student achievement, on closing achievement gaps, on being accountable for results, on trying to get qualified teachers into classrooms for the poorest kids, on providing good data and good assessments on where students were and how those assessments formed instructional practice. . . . We thought in general No Child Left Behind was the next step up in the standards movement.

Others on the panel pointed to different positive effects, depending on the vantage point from which they viewed the law. Maine's state commissioner of education, Susan Gendron, confirmed that the law had furthered the standards movement, as state chiefs have moved to align standards and accountability and to create longitudinal data systems. Wendy Puriefoy, head of the Public Education Network, saw significant, structured dialogues about public education occurring in communities because of the law and a stronger emphasis on making parents and communities partners in improving achievement. Virginia McLaughlin, dean of the School of Education at the College of William & Mary, welcomed the law's effort to open up the issue of teacher quality, although she preferred to use the term "competent" rather than "highly qualified." And the "numbers guy" on the panel, Bill Sanders, a statistician who has developed procedures for tracking individual student growth, confirmed that the scores of the lowest-achieving students are moving up, something that he can document because more and more states now have annual data on class cohorts.

Once the niceties were over with, and everyone had said what was good about the law, the panel turned to a number of troubling unintended consequences that have arisen from NCLB. And therein lies the tale of why the law is controversial and unsettling to educators whose careers have been built on a different set of values from those that have taken precedence under the implementation of

NCLB.

First, educators in schools deemed "in need of improvement" see no alternatives for meeting the strict timetables and performance levels of NCLB other than to limit the curriculum to the subjects tested and to drill students on test-taking skills. The reason is simply that the law rests on a foundation of regulations and sanctions. Kress believes the issue of sanctions is less important than critics contend, but, as Casserly pointed out, a basic psychology course teaches that punishment does not motivate people to do better. He continued:

The main problem, to my mind, is that the law and its accountability system have been overly focused on . . . sanctions, on compliance with the sanctions, without the added focus in the law about good instruction, good instructional systems, and technical assistance in research that will help schools actually attain the goals. . . . It has created all kinds of unintended, weird, and perverse side effects, including some narrowing of curriculum, teaching to the test, and all of that.

That's something that can be fixed. What the law conceptually needs to do, however, is to put more emphasis on good instruction with interventions.

Later in the discussion, Casserly agreed with Kress that the sanctions in NCLB are not terribly onerous. His view was that "they are stupid." Most of them involve writing a plan, replacing some staff members, reorganizing the school, bringing in a team, hiring outside advisors, or transferring students. "None of this stuff has anything to do with actually raising student achievement," he argued. "I just defy anybody to actually find any research that would suggest that those are successful strategies."

The Chattanooga Story

Originally an agricultural statistician, Bill Sanders became interested in following the academic growth of individual students in Tennessee. Years ago, that state's legislature required annual testing, which gave Sanders a database for his analyses.

Moderator John Merrow mentioned a school improvement initiative in Chattanooga that targeted eight very low-performing schools. This five-year reform effort was partially supported by local foundations and included the replacement of staff members and principals. The teachers who volunteered to participate in changing the schools "knew they were going to be part of a select team," Sanders said.

By any measure, the schools in that project were some of the worst in Tennessee, but Sanders' data demonstrate that the value-added score (a measure of students' academic growth) over the five years placed them mostly in the top 5% to 10% for the state. "The children didn't change. The demographics didn't change. The adults were changed," Sanders said. Merrow, who featured the Chattanooga story in one of his broadcasting segments, found it interesting that, "if you ask the people there why this happened, No Child Left Behind is not part of the conversation." -- ACL

Sanders said that his data reveal two troubling outcomes that are tied to NCLB's emphasis on penalties. One he called "teaching to the bubble kids." In schools

with the greatest likelihood of failing to meet AYP targets, the understandable strategy is to identify the students closest to meeting higher proficiency levels and intensify their instruction, while neglecting the children who are truly far behind, "so that you're actually putting more children at risk of not being proficient in the future." A second problem Sanders has uncovered in his data is that higher-performing students, including minority and low-income students, are regressing toward the mean because all of the attention and resources have been directed toward getting low-performing students up to standard.

While NCLB mentions parents hundreds of times and guarantees them greater involvement in decisions about their children, the law has not delivered on its promises, Wendy Puriefoy of the Public Education Network contended. This has led to frustration in many communities. "You can't tell people that you're going to change their lives and change the outcomes of their children's lives in school," she said, "without telling them what and how and consistently engaging them." Low-income parents like having higher goals for their children, according to Puriefoy, but the accountability provisions of the law have been poorly communicated, and families have no understanding of how to get better results or how to obtain the resources needed, mostly from the state level. Just as Puriefoy doubts that the school systems have the necessary infrastructure to deliver on the goals of NCLB,

William & Mary's Virginia McLaughlin finds the law's promises of a "highly qualified teacher" in every core-subject classroom highly questionable. In the first place, she said, the law fails to address the issue of teacher competency, which is different from certification. Another issue is the unequal distribution of well-prepared teachers, a problem that undermines the capacity of schools serving minority and low-income children to meet the law's goals. This is not a problem that can be solved simply with more money -- although that might help to attract more good teachers, such as those certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, to these schools. Rather, McLaughlin said, teachers want to work with strong principals, high-quality professional colleagues, adequate resources, and support from parents and community members.

Two Ideas on Standards

- Sandy Kress suggested that, instead of opting for national standards, the NCLB reauthorization should provide for a small study that would offer incentives to states to develop standards that reflect the knowledge and skills required for entry into college or the workplace. Higher education and the business sector would need to be partners in such an initiative. Furthermore, the secretary of education would not approve standards; rather, the secretary would simply verify that there was an alignment between the standards and the expectations of colleges and the work force.
- If Bill Sanders could be education czar for a day, he would expect all children to go up the same academic ramp but would acknowledge that, at any given time, they would not all be at the same place. Adults should be held responsible for the

speed at which children go up the ramp. For a low-achieving student, the standard would be to get him or her on the ramp and ready to move to meet the next proficiency level. For higher-achieving students, the goal would be postsecondary attainment, with standards set at all the steps along the way. The standards would be tailored to each student individually and would extend up to the top of the ramp. -- ACL

Interestingly, the panelists did not address inadequate funding for NCLB, although that was a major concern in the small-group discussions that followed and has been a frequent complaint of national education groups. The panelists did discuss the issue of supporting students with broader resources locally, such as health, housing, and employment services. Of course, these services need their own set of reforms, mainly better coordination among them. While Casserly noted that his urban districts willingly accepted responsibility for improving what schools can do to raise student achievement and Sanders downplayed socioeconomic factors in student progress, McLaughlin called for equal responsibility: "I'm not suggesting any dilution of that expectation [of raising student achievement]. I'm just saying that if education is being held to no excuses, then let's get the health care system in place. Let's get the other strategies in place to deal with the major underlying issue, which is poverty."

How to Make Changes

Kress, whose views of NCLB were the most positive among the panelists, mostly wanted to see its accountability provisions applied more forcefully to secondary schools. Maine Commissioner Gendron agreed that more effort should be expended on improving secondary schools but disagreed on adopting the NCLB model. The standard she proposed was adequate preparation for college or the workplace, and test-based accountability may not be sufficient for such purposes.

What fire there was in the panel discussion flickered brightest on the issue of national standards. This issue was "the elephant in the room," as Merrow described it. Puriefoy said that the students headed for highly competitive colleges had already met high national standards:

We already have national standards. Look at all the kids who are going to the . . . Ivy League schools [and] . . . the high schools that they're coming from and the graduation rate for those students and what they learn. It's pretty consistent across the country. Those kids that end up in those elite situations are already participating in a set of national standards.

Casserly argued that other students still needed national standards. But Kress said the notion of adopting a set of national standards was politically unfeasible, at least in the near future.

However the NCLB reauthorization deals with the matter of national standards, no one wanted the federal government to impose them. On the other hand, there was general agreement that the current structure, which allows each state to set its own standards, is nonsensical for a country that wants to remain competitive

in the global economy. That's not how we build our interstate highway system or run our banking system. One answer may be bubbling up from the America Diploma Project, in which 13 states are reaching agreement on common assessments of core subjects. "That's going to drive expectations," said Gendron. The sentiment among members of the audience was for standards to include those subjects now neglected because of NCLB's narrow focus, especially science, the social sciences, and the arts.

The fact that schools that have shown great improvement have failed to meet AYP goals while other schools that have slipped in performance have stayed off the list of schools needing improvement is a vexing paradox. However, Kress believes it can be easily fixed in the reauthorization.

The panelists generally agreed that it would be better to redesign the idea of adequate yearly progress so that it would consider growth in student achievement rather than expecting schools to meet fixed levels of proficiency. Sanders, who is regarded as the "father" of the growth model, noted that not all growth models are of equal quality. Some are just simplistic, he said. Preferring to call them "projection models," he suggested that a provision of the reauthorization might offer incentives for schools to encourage the academic growth of all students -- not just those in danger of being left behind, but also those who are already at the proficient level, "because you want to get them on trajectories that move them up the ramp as fast as possible."

Moderators always get the last words. For Merrow, the opportunity came at a debriefing session for the Summit, which was held the following day. There, he summarized the panel discussion and wondered why the panelists had shown so little anger about the unintended consequences of NCLB. Based on what he has seen in schools serving poor children, he finds that NCLB "is training kids for jobs that won't exist and is drilling the joy out of learning. [Secretary of Education] Spellings likens it to Ivory Soap, but to me it's more like a candy bar -- M&M's -- as in more and more children left behind."

How to Be Heard on the Reauthorization of NCLB

Each small group that discussed the panel's debate took up the matter of how individuals and PDK itself can advocate for revising NCLB so that it avoids bad consequences and serves broad purposes for public education. The groups agreed that it is at the local level that the input of individuals and of such organizations as PDK chapters is most needed and potentially most effective. Among the priorities cited:

- * Be well informed.
- * Make sure all constituencies, including parents and community leaders, are informed regularly of the impact of the law.
- * Convene local meetings, workshops, and community discussion groups to focus on the changes needed, and include legislators in these conversations.
- * Use associations such as PDK for advocacy by relying on them for accurate,

pertinent information and by enlisting their aid in creating local forums on the reauthorization.

- * Gather data on the local impact of the law to share at the forums and with the media.

- * Make speeches, write letters, and generate interest in discussions of the law on college and university campuses.

At a session on advocacy and policy strategies to benefit children, John Wilson, executive director of the National Education Association, advised PDK on seven habits of advocacy that can maximize effectiveness.

- * Have a good message. NEA embeds one message in every speech by its officials -- "Great Public Schools: A Basic Right for Every Child."

- * Be a good messenger: remember that, because you are an educator, people are listening to you.

- * Know your policy makers: know both their background and the issues that trigger their interest.

- * Be an asset: educate policy makers and bring others to the table.

- * Be low maintenance: know when to bother legislative staff at state and federal levels and when not to.

- * Volunteer in political campaigns: that way, you can get the politicians you want.

- * Put your money where your mouth is: contributions are the mother's milk of politics.

This is the American way, Wilson said. "This is how we are going to get revisions of NCLB. You would be surprised at what we can do collectively."

SOURCE: http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/k_v88/k0701e1.htm

FEATURED WEB-BASED LESSON:

THE GREAT COLLEGE SEARCH (DO I REALLY HAVE TO THINK ABOUT THIS?) (Grades 9 -11)

It's really never too early for students to begin thinking about college. From their first year as freshmen, they should be keeping their grades up, participating in clubs and teams, and forming positive relationships with teachers and peers. However, many students delay planning for college because the application process is daunting, time-consuming, and confusing. With seemingly endless paperwork, exams, and deadlines, it's no wonder students are loath to begin and often wait until the last minute.

Through activities presented in this lesson, students will become familiar with the many phases of the college application process, including choosing schools that suit their needs and desires, understanding the standardized test requirements, constructing an effective entrance essay, and procuring strong letters of recommendation. They will develop the skills necessary to embark on a productive college search and become comfortable with the steps involved in compiling a strong application packet. After examining Web sites and video clips, students will take the first step in assembling their college folders by completing their personal profiles.

http://www.wnet.org/edonline/ntti/resources/lessons/ss_college/index.html

WEB SITES & WEB-BASED LESSONS FOR TEACHERS & STUDENTS

The Encyclopedia of Life

This complex database would be useful for advanced biology and bio-chem students. It is an ongoing project to "catalog the complete proteome of every living species." The goal of the program is to make available known information about DNA sequences and related relevant information. The information can be accessed via the web or with the W3C standards information model. Currently, the protein database information is available.

<http://www.eolproject.info/index.html>

Which of You Is a Witch? The Salem Witchcraft Trials and The Crucible (lesson plans)

http://www.wnet.org/edonline/ntti/resource/lessons/l_witch.html

A Wrinkled Relationship: Tillie Olsen's I Stand Here Ironing (lesson)

Through Internet-based interactive activities, students will become acquainted with Tillie Olsen as a writer of women's experiences. Through viewing & responding to video, they will become familiar with the hardships of mothers during the Great Depression. They will also gain an understanding of the literary style of monologue and first-person point of view through creating their own monologues in response to a piece of art. They will define the literary element of theme and identify themes in the story.

<http://www.wnet.org/edonline/ntti/resource/lessons/wrinkled/index.html>

In the Shadow of Death (web-based lesson)

This lesson examines the progression of events leading to the Holocaust, in which over six million Jews and others were killed as a result of discrimination, hatred, and prejudice. The lesson will introduce students to the initial labeling and classification of Jews through the use of images on the Web. Students will then gather additional information about the history and effects of the Holocaust on survivors through the use of video and Web sites. This lesson would ideally accompany a literature study of Elie Wiesel's NIGHT or Anne Frank's THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL.

<http://www.wnet.org/edonline/ntti/resources/lessons/death/index.html>

Accidental Scientist: Science of Cooking

looks at the science behind food and cooking. Learn about what happens when you eat sugar, bake bread, cook an egg, or pickle foods. Find out how muscle turns to meat, what makes meat tender, and what gives meat its flavor. Discover breads and spices of the world. Explore your sense of taste and smell. (Exploratorium, National Science Foundation)

http://free.ed.gov/resource.cfm?resource_id=1866

Earth and Space Science

provides activities, animations, and lessons on astronomy, the solar system, and earth's structure, processes, and history.

Topics include earthquakes, faults, tectonic plates, soil liquefaction, Antarctica, convection currents in water, continental drift, extremophiles, auroras, subduction, Curie point, ozone, climate change, earth's magnetic field, and seasons. (Exploratorium, National Science Foundation)

http://free.ed.gov/resource.cfm?resource_id=1857

Global Climate Change

is an introduction to the world of scientific research on climate change. Learn about physical processes underlying the earth's climate, data on how the climate is changing and the role of human activity, and questions and uncertainties that researchers continue to explore. The site is organized in four parts: the atmosphere, hydrosphere (oceans and water), cryosphere (snow and ice), and biosphere (living organisms). (Exploratorium, National Science Foundation)

http://free.ed.gov/resource.cfm?resource_id=1865

Milestones in the History of Energy and Its Uses

features a timeline of energy developments and uses since the 1700s. Learn about biomass, coal, electricity, geothermal, natural gas, nuclear power, oil, solar power, wind turbines, and transportation. See biographies of individuals who contributed to energy and science. Read a history of energy in the U.S. from 1635-2000. (Department of Energy)

http://www.free.ed.gov/resource.cfm?resource_id=1868

Data, Data, Everywhere...and What Am I to Think? (lesson)

In this world of ever-increasing information our students must learn to collect, analyze, and interpret data for practical application and problem solving. This unit is designed to streamline the introduction of several graphical organizers and how to use them most effectively. The students will visit Internet sites to learn of new data presentation modes and how to interpret various types of data.

<http://www.wnet.org/edonline/ntti/resource/lessons/data/index.html>

Significant What? (lesson)

Are your measurements accurate? How precise is that measurement? Many students read these two questions and suppose they are asking the same thing. This lesson differentiates between "accuracy" and "precision."

<http://www.wnet.org/edonline/ntti/resource/lessons/significant/index.html>

Fabulous Funnels (Tornados) (lesson)

This is an interactive Internet lesson in which students will learn what tornados are, how they are created, measured, and their effects on communities. Students will keep a journal of their activities and keep track of daily tornado and supercell activity throughout the United States by monitoring the U.S. National Weather Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration warning site.

<http://www.wnet.org/edonline/ntti/resource/lessons/funnels/index.html>

Growing, Growing, Graphing (lesson)

In this statistics lesson, students focus on China's population growth. They graph data on graph paper using a graphing calculator or spreadsheet software. Students predict future population numbers and decide if the population growth is linear or exponential.

<http://www.wnet.org/edonline/ntti/resource/lessons/graphing/index.html>

How Big? How Small? (Lesson)

Using a variety of Web resources relating to the solar system and microworlds, students will explore the Internet and note occurrences of objects and measurements that are very, very small and very, very large.

<http://www.wnet.org/edonline/ntti/resource/lessons/7a/index.html>

Proof of the Century! (lesson)

Students learn to do Web research in the field of mathematics. They learn about mathematical proofs and apply them to the Pythagorean theorem. Students also explore the general ideas of Fermat's Last Theorem.

<http://www.wnet.org/edonline/ntti/resource/lessons/pythag/index.html>

Tracing Math's Evolution (lesson)

In this lesson, students will use the Internet to discover the identities of several current and historically significant mathematicians. They will be able to explore the contributions of different mathematicians and recognize that mathematics is an integral part of many careers.

<http://www.wnet.org/edonline/ntti/resource/lessons/mathevolution/index.html>

Understanding Pi (Lesson) (Grades 7-9)

Students learn the mathematical value of pi through the process of measuring circumference. Students conduct hands-on calculations of cylindrical objects, demonstrate the properties of a

circle, and discover for themselves how pi works.

<http://www.wnet.org/edonline/ntti/resource/lessons/pi/index.html>

Virtual Polyhedra and the Real World (lesson)

Using Web resources, students will study the complex geometric structures, polyhedra. Students will examine virtual reality models, create three-dimensional paper models, & view photographic, graphic, & animated examples of polyhedra.

<http://www.wnet.org/edonline/ntti/resource/lessons/polyhedraov/index.html>

Women in Math (lesson)

Students explore the lives & careers of women who had historic and contemporary contributions to the fields of mathematics & computer science.

<http://www.wnet.org/edonline/ntti/resource/lessons/womeninmath/index.html>

Physical Sciences

presents more than 200 activities, visualizations, and lessons on electricity and magnetism, energy, heat and thermodynamics, interactions of matter, light and optics, measurement, motion and forces, matter (its states, structure, and properties), and vibrations and waves. (Exploratorium, National Science Foundation)

http://www.free.ed.gov/resource.cfm?resource_id=1859

SOME UPCOMING EVENTS

CHARTER SCHOOLS: KEEPING THE PROMISE OR DISMANTLING OUR COMMUNITIES

March 28, 2007 9:00 am to 11:30 am (refreshments available at 8:30)

The Center for Community Change, 1536 U St. NW, Washington, D.C.

(Please RSVP to Leigh Dingerson at 202-339-9349 or

Ldingerson@communitychange.org.)

Over 15 years ago, charter schools were proposed as places where innovative ideas in public education could be developed, then shared. Today, over 4,000 charter schools are in operation nationally.

Are these schools keeping the promise to strengthen public education? Whose interests are charter schools serving?

Join us as we explore the public's experience with charter schools in Ohio, New Orleans, the District of Columbia and Boston and participate in a dialogue about how we can reclaim the promise of charters.

Moderator: Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond

Panelists:

Zein El-Amine, Save Our Schools DC
Amy Hanauer, Policy Matters Ohio
Jim Randels, teacher, New Orleans Public Schools (along with students from New Orleans)
Ted Sizer, founder, Coalition of Essential Schools
Dania Vasquez, Center for Collaborative Education
George Wood, The Forum for Education and Democracy

Please RSVP to Leigh Dingerson at 202-339-9349 or at Ldingerson@communitychange.org.

Event Co-Sponsors:

The Center for Community Change
The Forum for Education and Democracy
The Open Society Institute

UPCOMING SUMMER CONFERENCES:

National Academy Foundation: NAF 2007 Annual Institute for Staff Development,

July 18-21, 2007 Washington, D.C.

<http://www.naf.org/cps/rde/xchg/SID-3F57E0FB-65C418E2/naf-2006/hs.xsl/1201.htm>

High Schools That Work Staff Development Conference, July 11-14, 2007
<http://www.sreb.org/main/SREB/registerinfo.asp>

Model Schools Conference (Bill Daggett), June 30 - July 3, 2007, Washington, D.C.
<http://www.modelschoolsconference.com>

National High School Association/California League of High Schools Summer Institutes,
Maui, HI - July 10 - 13, 2007 ; Indian Wells, CA - July 29 - 31, 2007
<http://www.clhs.net>

Fall Event: "A Principled Stand"

Coalition of Essential Schools Fall Forum, November 8-10, 2007, Adams Mark Hotel, Denver, CO

Join CES at Fall Forum to take a stand for the relationships, pedagogy, structures, and policies that create and sustain personalized, equitable, and intellectually challenging schools for all of our children. K-12 educators, students, parents, and other leading thinkers in education meet at Fall Forum to collaborate and inspire school transformation.

Look for the Call

for Proposals for conference sessions to be distributed in mid-April. Applications will be accepted from mid-April through mid-May. Please note that the period during which CES National will be accepting applications is one month earlier this year, so begin planning your proposals right away and be sure to submit them before the deadline.

IMPORTANT DATES

- * The Call for Proposals will be released in early April
 - * Proposals may be submitted online beginning April 9th
 - * Proposals for sessions due May 14th
 - * Conference registration opens in late August
- Online Events

Double the Work: Challenges & Solutions to Acquiring Language & Academic Literacy for Adolescent ELLs

April 5 - Free Online Event 12-1:30 pm Pacific Time

In this interactive online presentation, participants will explore research on adolescent English language learners (ELLs) and examine the findings and policy recommendations from a recent report, Double the Work. The study's co-author, Deborah Short, Senior Research Associate at the Center for Applied Linguistics, will discuss the development of academic literacy for second language learners, identify the backgrounds of adolescent ELLs in U.S. schools, & compare model programs for these students with current practices. Specific instructional strategies that promote academic literacy for language and content classrooms will be described. This presentation is co-sponsored by SchoolsMovingUp and CREATE (Center for Research on the Educational Achievement and Teaching of English Language Learners). 12-1:30 pm Pacific Time, 4/5

To Sign Up: <http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/cs/wested/view/e/15737xt=signup>

NOTE: You can sign-up for either the Live Web Telecast OR the Live Teleconference w. powerpoint slide presentation

To call in: Toll Free 1.866.330.1200, Participant Code 894.7100#

NOTE: You can download the report Double The Work at <http://www.all4ed.org/publications/Doublework/index.html>

Reading Science for Understanding in Middle & High School

April 25 - Free Online Event 10:30am - 12noon Pacific Time

In this interactive event, Cynthia Greenleaf, Co-Director of WestEd's Strategic Literacy Initiative (SLI), will engage participants in an examination of the possibilities and impact of integrating literacy instruction with science instruction at the middle and high school levels using the Reading Apprenticeship instructional framework. This research-based instructional framework is designed to improve the teaching effectiveness of content-area middle and high school teachers, literacy coaches, and teacher educators.

10:30 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. Pacific Time

To Sign Up: <http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/cs/wested/view/e/15327xt=signup>

NOTE: You can sign-up for either the Live Web Telecast OR the Live Teleconference w. powerpoint slide presentation

To call in: Toll Free 1.866.330.1200, Participant Code 894.7100#

A FEW FUNDING AND AWARD OPPORTUNITIES

Grant Title: Win a Wireless Lab sweepstakes

Organization: CDW-G and Discovery Education

Eligibility: Educators

Value: Five wireless computer labs

Deadline: May 1, 2007

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.

<http://cdwg.discoveryeducation.com>

Awards of \$100,000 or more to expand degrees in computing

Grant Title: Broadening Participation in Computing

Organization: National Science Foundation

Eligibility: Those seeking post-secondary degrees in computing

Value: Varies

Deadline: June 4, 2007

The Broadening Participation in Computing (BPC) program aims to significantly increase the number of U.S. citizens and permanent residents receiving post secondary degrees in the computing disciplines, with an emphasis on students from communities with longstanding underrepresentation in computing: women, persons with disabilities, and minorities. The BPC program seeks to engage the computing community in developing and implementing innovative methods to improve recruitment and retention of these students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Because the lack of role models in the professoriate can be a barrier to participation, the BPC program also aims to develop effective strategies for encouraging individuals to pursue academic careers in computing and become these role models.

http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=13510