

CASN News May 2008

CASN News is supported by the Career Academy Support Network (CASN) in the Graduate School of Education at University of California Berkeley.

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world." Mahatma Gandhi

"...to dreamers everywhere...long shots do come in and...hard work, dedication, and perseverance will overcome almost any prejudice and open almost any door."
John H. Johnson

In answer to the question, "What are the elements of a successful (public education) system?": A rigorous curriculum, great teachers and great relationships with the kids—which means smaller learning communities. And you need bold change agents in the system itself. People who are willing to take risks." Melinda Gates

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2 MILLION MINUTES

According to a new documentary, 2 Million Minutes, lack of focus on education is putting the U.S. in jeopardy when it comes to global competition.

- * Less than 40% of American high school students take a science course that is more rigorous than general biology.
- * Only 18% take advanced courses in physics, chemistry, or biology.
- * Only 45% take math coursework beyond 2 years of algebra & one year of geometry.
- * 50% of all college freshmen require remedial coursework.
- * Compared to the U.S., China now produces eight times more scientists and engineers, while India prepares three times as many as the U.S. Source: <http://2mminutes.com/pressblog6.html>

PRESTIGIOUS UNIVERSITIES REJECT RECORD NUMBER OF APPLICANTS

Of the more than 27,000 students who applied to Harvard this year, nearly 93% were rejected, including many of the 5,800 with perfect reading or math SAT scores and more than 3,300 valedictorians. Several other Ivy League colleges set similar records, officials said, as decision letters were mailed this week. "We love the people we admitted, but we also love a very large number of the people who we were not able to admit," said William R. Fitzsimmons, Harvard's dean of admissions and financial aid.

FIVE DISTRICTS NAMED AS BROAD PRIZE FINALISTS

Florida's Miami-Dade and Broward County schools will compete with Long Beach, California and Texas' Aldine and Brownsville school systems for the prestigious Broad Prize for Urban Education, to be awarded Oct. 14. The top winner will be awarded \$500,000 in scholarships earmarked for graduating seniors, while the four runners-up will each get \$125,000 in scholarships. The Foundation said that each of the districts educates significant numbers of Hispanic students, who are making "notable progress" in narrowing achievement gaps with their white peers."

SAT WRITING TEST GOOD PREDICTOR OF COLLEGE FRESHMEN GRADES

The new writing portion of the SAT is actually a better predictor of grades for freshmen college students than the older, more established, critical reading and mathematics portions, according to preliminary results of two new studies. The College Board, which administers the SAT, studied test scores from 150,000 freshmen entering 110 colleges in 2006 and then looked at their GPAs at the end of their freshmen year, says Wayne Camara, vice president of research. "Our study suggests that the writing test is the best single predictor" of freshman grades, he says. The study won't be finalized until summer, he says.

The University of California drew a similar conclusion from an analysis of its incoming 2006 freshmen and their GPAs, says Sam Agronow, coordinator of admissions research and evaluation at the University of California's Office of the President. While the best predictor of grades is a student's high school GPA, the writing portion of the SAT is the most important among tests required by the UC system, Agronow says.

Anecdotally, colleges are using the writing portion as a monitored writing sample, says Barmak Nassirian, a policy analyst with the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. "It wasn't the scores that interested them as that they encountered the student's voice, not that of some coach or consultant." (source: U.S.A. Today)

SLCs MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Just a few years ago, fewer than 40% of students graduated from Clover Park High School in Lakewood, Wash. But after the school assigned students in small groups to the same teachers for all four years of high school, more than 70% of students now graduate. "You've got a relationship that is so tight with those kids that they're willing to share their life with you," said principal John Seaton. "So you can become part of the solution for their problems."

CA STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES REQUIRED TO PASS EXIT EXAM THIS YEAR

A legal settlement that ended a seven year lawsuit requires that all students with disabilities must pass the California Exit Exam in order to graduate from high school. The settlement provides tutoring services for students struggling to pass the exam for up to two years after graduation day.

<http://www.sfgage.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=c/a/2008/04/02/MNMRVTEN1.DTL&type=education>

WASHINGTON STATE REVAMPS CAREER & TECHNICAL ED

New legislation in Washington State calls for an overhaul of its career and technical education system, improving high school training programs to make the switch to industry apprenticeships and community colleges more seamless. The bill provides money to modernize and expand CTE centers, as well as requirements to beef up math, reading, and science content of the courses.

CRITICAL NINTH GRADE YEAR GETS LEAST EXPERIENCED TEACHERS

In "The Linchpin Year" in May 2008's Education Leadership, Billie Donegal questions current practices surrounding the teaching of the ninth grade in public high schools. More students fail in ninth grade than any other year, discipline referrals are at their highest, and drop out rates are greatest between the ninth and tenth grade.

Despite this, novice teachers are routinely assigned ninth grade classes, student to teacher ratios are highest, and the most qualified teachers are reserved for honors classes and seniors. Donegal suggests a number of measures that will begin to remedy the problem, including a change in staffing practices; effective, high-impact freshman classes with the top teachers, including remedial classes; and interdisciplinary teacher teams to work with the same group of ninth graders and provide support.

[http://www.newsletteronline.com/user/user.fas/s=543/fp=3/tp=39?
T=open_article,969030&P=article](http://www.newsletteronline.com/user/user.fas/s=543/fp=3/tp=39?T=open_article,969030&P=article)

MOVEMENT TO CHANGE GRADING POLICIES GROWS

Schools across the country have begun to set policies that give minimum scores of 50 on the grading scale, setting off a heated national debate. Some zero critics find that assigning zeros to Fs creates a gap that can make it mathematically impossible for failing students to ever catch up. While the other letter grades are broken down in increments of 10 from 60 to 100, there is a 59-point spread between D and F. Opponents of the minimum-50 method, however, say the gap between D and F exists because passing requires a minimum competency and handing out more credit than a student has earned is "grade inflation." USA Today, 5/19/08

http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2008-05-18-zeroes-main_N.htm

RELATED ARTICLE: ZERO ALTERNATIVES

In a related article, "Zero Alternatives", Thomas Guskey maintains that zeros are seldom an accurate description of a student's achievement and skew average grades dramatically. Instead of prompting greater effort, zeros and the low grades they yield may cause students to withdraw from learning. One viable alternative? Assign an "I" or "Incomplete" grade with explicit requirements for completing the work. (source: Principal Leadership, NASSP)

MORE HONORS CLASSES CUT AS AP/IB OFFERINGS SPIKE

Honors courses are gradually being eliminated in some schools, giving way to the rising popularity of AP and IB programs—a trend that is continuing to gain momentum. Why the change? One reason is that the Challenge Index, a nationally recognized ratings program, ranks schools by the number of students participating in AP and IB courses—and many schools are eager to compete. Some honors students, however, aren't buying it. They're afraid of being left out entirely, considering themselves too advanced for regular classes yet not quite ready for the rigor of college-level courses. Washington Post, 5/19/08

URBAN LOS ANGELES STUDENTS CALL FOR MORE COLLEGE PREPARATORY COURSES

93% of South East Los Angeles students want access to more-rigorous classes, according to a student-led survey of more than 6,000 teens. "A lot of students are depressed because of the conditions in their school," said Anna Exiga, a high-school junior who helped organize the survey. (source: Los Angeles Times)

STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECT UNEARTH'S WORLD WAR II HERO

Some enterprising students from rural Kansas discovered a Catholic woman who saved Jewish children during World War II. The story began when four high school students were shown a news clipping, which said, "Irena Sendler saved 2500 children from the Warsaw Ghetto in 1942-43." The students began to research this amazingly underreported story by looking through primary and secondary sources. They eventually found that Irena Sendler, a Warsaw social worker, had gone into the ghetto and talked Jewish parents and grandparents into letting her take their children in order to save them from death camps. She then took the children past Nazi guards and had them adopted into the homes of Polish families or hid them in convents and orphanages. In addition, she made lists of the children's real names and put them in jars that were then buried. At one point, the Nazis captured her and she was beaten severely, but the Polish underground bribed a guard to release her, and she went into hiding.

After the students' diligent research, they wrote a play depicting Sendler's life. Since then, they have done over 225 performances for clubs and civic groups all over the U.S. and Europe. The students also bring a jar to every performance, aptly titled "Life in a Jar," and collect funds that are sent to Poland for the care of Irena and other rescuers. <http://www.irenasendler.org/thestory.asp>

COLLEGE SUMMIT ADDRESSES HIGHER ED ACCESS GAP

Low-income students face harsh realities when it comes to postsecondary education. Only seven percent of low-income kids earn a college degree by the age of 25, and college going rates for the highest achieving low-income students are equivalent to those of the lowest achieving more affluent kids. Recently "NOW on PBS" aired a year-long investigation of a program trying to level the college access/attainment playing field. College Summit, which works in partnership with schools, districts and colleges to develop a sustainable model for raising college enrollment rates, wants to close this gap by helping needy students select schools, complete applications, write personal statements and navigate financial aid. After months of documenting student participants in Denver (CO), PBS found that many of the students profiled are realizing their dreams. In fact, according to College Summit statistics, nearly 80 percent of participants in their Peer Leadership program go on to college. <http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/417/index.html>

COLLEGE BOARD TO ELIMINATE FOUR AP COURSES

For the first time in its 53-year history, the College Board will eliminate, after the 2008-09 school year, multiple Advanced Placement courses with low enrollment: Italian, Latin literature, French literature and a computer science AB course.

Although the board has cut other AP courses in the past, it has never eliminated multiple courses at once. Money that has been used to support the newly deleted courses will instead be apportioned among the seven remaining AP foreign-language courses, as well as a course that explores Spanish literature and a Latin class that studies the works of Roman poet Vergil. The College Board is continuing to offer a test in Computer Science A.

STUDENTS FLOCK TO TAKE ONLINE COLLEGE COURSES

Online college courses are becoming ever more popular, according to a 2007 report published by the Sloan Consortium, an online education association based at Babson College in Massachusetts. The study found that almost 3.5 million students were taking at least one online course during fall 2006. The trend is being set largely by community colleges that cater to nontraditional students who need a more flexible way to earn degrees. Discussion boards, reading material, e-mail, and audio lectures usually characterize Web-based courses at these community colleges. Many traditional universities also have added online courses in recent years, particularly in graduate programs geared toward working professionals. http://seattlepl.nwsourc.com/local/348198_online22.html

FLORIDA DISTRICT TO OFFER ADVANCED PLACEMENT DIPLOMA

Students in Florida's Brevard County schools who complete six AP courses and pass the related AP exams may be able to earn a special diploma recognizing their accomplishments. "All of our schools have had AP classes, so this is an opportunity for all students to be eligible for a diploma of distinction," said Walter Christy, the district's director of secondary programs. (source: Florida Today)

SOME EDUCATORS QUESTION QUALITY OF CREDIT-RECOVERY PROGRAMS

Dennis Bunyan graduated last year after making up a semester-long English class with three essays he says took him about 10 hours to complete. That has some educators worried that such credit-recovery programs allow students to earn a diploma while doing far less work than would normally be required. (source: New York Times)

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY TO ENCOURAGE ENTERING STUDENTS TO TAKE A YEAR OFF

As many as 10% of graduating high-school seniors admitted to Princeton University next year will be encouraged to take a year off before starting college, under a new program meant to promote global service. Such students would pay no tuition nor receive credit, but may receive financial aid to pay for fees, board and travel. "I think if everyone here spent a year focusing on someone else's needs, I think Princeton would be transformed," said sophomore Eliza MacFarlane, who spent a year in rural Ireland, helping children with autism. (source: Cleveland Plain Dealer)

N.C. SENATOR WANTS UNDERGRADUATES TO GIVE BACK TO SCHOOLS

State Sen. Tony Rand, D-Fayetteville, has proposed legislation under which all college students looking to earn a bachelor's degree from a public or private institution in North Carolina would need to log 20 hours each semester mentoring or tutoring students ranging from the elementary grades up through high school.

COLIN POWELL: TRUE DROP-OUT RATE A CATASTROPHE

On average, 51.8% of students in the 50 largest U.S. cities graduate from high school, although 17 of those cities posted graduation rates below 50% (in 2003-04) and only 70% of all American high school students graduate on time, according to a new America's Promise Alliance Report. Additionally, suburban and rural-based public high school students, were more likely to graduate than their peers in the inner city. "When more than one million students a year drop out of high school, it is more than a problem, it is a catastrophe," said former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell.

In some cases, the findings provide glaringly different numbers than those reported by districts and states. Currently, states are allowed to calculate their own graduation rates using all sorts of methods, many of which critics say are based on unreliable information. New Mexico, for example, has defined its graduation rate as the percentage of enrolled 12th graders who receive a diploma, thereby ignoring all those that drop out before 12th grade. To help alleviate the tangle of inaccurate state data that have obscured the severity of the high school dropout crisis, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings will require all states to use the same federal formula. This requirement would be one of the most far-reaching regulatory actions ever taken by the federal government and would basically affect every high school in the country." <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/01/education/01child.html?ref=education>

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: THE VALUE OF TEACH FOR AMERICA

Teach for America, the nonprofit organization that places college graduates for two years in challenging public schools, will place 3,700 new teachers this September, a 28 percent increase from the 2,900 it placed last fall. In 1990, the program's first, Teach for America placed 500 teachers and there is a huge surge in applications from college seniors this year - 24,700 for 2008, compared to 18,000 in 2007, accounting for a 37 percent increase. Additionally, Teach for America was the number one employer this year at Duke University, Emory University, George Washington University, Georgetown University, New York University, and Spelman College.

Another NY Times story describes a new study which suggests that talented young teachers can have a lasting impact on student performance even if they do not make a career of teaching.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/14/education/14teach.html>
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/16/opinion/16fri4.html?th&emc=th>

Plus Working paper from National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research: <http://www.urban.org/publications/411542.html>

RESEARCH QUESTIONS VALUE OF EXIT EXAMS

Exit exams do not benefit learning or future job prospects, according to a new study to be published in the journals of Educational Policy and Sociology of Education. "It seems like there's two options. ... One option is to get rid of them. The other is to think about how to make them more effective," said University of Minnesota sociologist Rob Warren. "It seems that exit exams could increase academic achievement if they were more difficult. But if we're going to go that way, we have to realize that with higher standards are going to come lower graduation rates." (source: Minnesota Public Radio)

TEACHING MATH SO STUDENTS ARE READY FOR COLLEGE

"Rethinking High School: Supporting All Students to be College-Ready in Math," a new report by WestEd, profiles three public high schools that are successfully preparing diverse students to be college- and career-ready. Researchers found that the high schools in Bellevue, Wash.; Norfolk, Va.; and Boston, Mass. share three elements that all work together: offering high-level math courses and support for all students; providing intensive professional development for teachers to improve their subject knowledge and teaching skills; and using student progress and evaluations to help teachers tailor their lessons. While the schools' approaches vary, students in each have demonstrated improvement on proficiency tests. <http://www.wested.org/cs/we/view/rs/871>

REPORT: "CRAFTING A NEW VISION FOR HIGH SCHOOL: HOW STATES CAN JOIN ACADEMIC AND TECHNICAL STUDIES TO PROMOTE MORE POWERFUL LEARNING"

In cooperation with the Washington-based Council of Chief State School Officers, the Southern Regional Education Board, in Atlanta, issued a report last week calling for states and schools to increase substantially the quality of their career and technical education.

The report notes that the latest reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act requires that schools and two-year colleges accepting Perkins money must, for the first time, integrate rigorous academic and career and technical instruction, and link secondary and postsecondary education.

It cites a recent study by the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education showing that high school students at all levels of achievement were less likely to drop out if they took a combination of academic and career or technical courses.

The SREB report calls for states to align their career and technical curriculum with college-readiness standards, conduct end-of-course assessments, and establish panels of college faculty, high school teachers, school officials, and employers to devise curriculum frameworks and course syllabuses.

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/05/21/38report-1.h27.html>

Report: <http://www.sreb.org/publications/2008/08V07CraftingNewVision.asp>

STUDY: RAISE TEACHER STARTING SALARIES, ATTRACT BETTER TEACHERS?

The United States lags behind other countries in teacher compensation, which in turn adversely affects the ability to recruit high-quality candidates. A recent study by McKinsey and Company argues that good starting salaries are an essential ingredient for getting the right people to become teachers, writes Joydeep Roy for Economic Snapshots. Though people who enter teaching often cite a number of reasons for doing so, surveys find that unless school systems offer salaries commensurate with other career opportunities, the teaching profession will not appeal to attractive candidates. The McKinsey study shows that starting salaries in the United States are much lower than in other Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. In fact, starting salaries for teachers in the United States are only 81 percent of per capita gross domestic product, while all other OECD countries pay their teachers a significantly higher relative starting wage.

http://www.epi.org/content.cfm/webfeatures_snapshots_20080402

REPORT: PROPORTION OF MINORITIES PURSUING STEM FIELDS STATIC, AT BEST

A new report from the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering (NACME) finds that participation rates for African American, Native Americans and Latinos in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields have flatlined, and in some cases declined. The report also discovered a vast pool of minority students who simply aren't prepared to take advantage of STEM fields. Furthermore, any progress has neither been steady nor substantial enough for the representation of minorities in STEM to reflect their overall proportion of the population. Specifically, from 1995 to 2005, the proportion of bachelor's degrees in engineering awarded to African Americans declined. Meanwhile, African Americans, Native Americans and Latinos constitute 30 percent of the nation's undergraduate students (a proportion that is expected to be 38 percent by 2025), yet fewer than 12 percent of baccalaureate engineering graduates in this country come from these minority groups. <http://www.nacme.org/>

NATION'S REPORT CARD: WRITING 2007

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, more students in grades eight and twelve were writing at a basic level 2007, but few scored at a proficient level and achievement gaps remain between whites and minorities and between males and females. http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/writing_2007/

BRIEF: IMPROVING THE DISTRIBUTION OF TEACHERS IN LOW-PERFORMING HIGH SCHOOLS

This brief from Alliance for Excellent Education examines the inequitable distribution of high-quality teachers, who tend to primarily serve students in schools with greater financial resources, fewer low-income students, safer working conditions, higher student achievement levels, and fewer students of color. The brief concludes that the federal government should encourage statewide longitudinal data systems and improve teacher preparation to balance the distribution of high-quality teachers. <http://www.all4ed.org>

MORE AND MORE PARENTS EXPECT THEIR CHILDREN TO GO TO COLLEGE

A new report from the National Center for Education Statistics looks at the relationship between the educational expectations of parents and the postsecondary planning families and schools engaged in. The results show that 91 percent of students in grades six through 12 had parents who expected them to continue their education beyond high school, and 65 percent have parents who expect them to finish college. In addition, among students whose parents expected them to continue their education after high school, 82 percent had parents who reported that the family was planning on helping to pay for their child's postsecondary education costs.

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008079.pdf>

EXAMINING THE EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL INITIATIVE

Early college high schools combine a regular high school with college courses in a rigorous but supportive program, thereby compressing the amount of time it takes to complete both a high school diploma and the first two years of college. In addition, early college high schools are based on the concept that academic rigor combined with the opportunity to save time and money in post-secondary education can be a powerful motivator for students to work hard. Typically, these schools are intended for low-income youths to increase the college attendance rates of underrepresented populations. A new case study from Jobs for the Future (JFF) examines the features of the Georgia College Early College (GCEC), which deliberately recruits students from the community who perform below grade level. The college-going culture, small class sizes and other support structures enable students to believe in themselves and raise their aspirations. The JFF case study goes on to explain how GCEC achieves its mission of college success for all.

<http://www.jff.org/Documents/empoweringstudents.pdf>

REPORT: ENGAGED FOR SUCCESS: SERVICE-LEARNING AS A TOOL FOR HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT PREVENTION

This report from Civic Enterprises argues that service learning programs have the potential to make classroom learning more relevant, increase student engagement, and therefore keep students in school longer. <http://www.civicerprises.net>

www.civicerprises.net

THE ART OF COLLABORATION: PROMISING PRACTICES FOR INTEGRATING THE ARTS AND SCHOOL REFORM

This publication from the Arts Education Partnership outlines promising practices for building community partnerships that integrate the arts into urban education systems.

http://www.aep-arts.org/publications/info.htm?publication_id=35

BEATING THE ODDS: HOW 13 NYC SCHOOLS BRING LOW-PERFORMING NINTH-GRADERS TO TIMELY GRADUATION & COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

This report from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform describes a qualitative study of a small group of New York City high schools that are “beating the odds” by producing higher than predicted graduation and college-going rates for ninth-graders who entered with far below-average eighth-grade reading and math scores. The study identified four key strategies: academic rigor, networks of timely supports, college expectations and access, and effective use of data. <http://www.annenberginstitute.org/Products/BTO.php>

A panel of experts examined case studies and research on schools that successfully reformed themselves to make recommendations in a new guide from the U.S. Education Department's research branch. Leadership changes, committed staff and teaching consistency are among the recommendations presented.

OPINION: MANY WARNINGS FROM NATION AT RISK STILL TRUE

It was 25 years ago that A Nation at Risk issued dire warnings about the state of American public education. Today, despite numerous attempts to correct the “rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people,” public education in the United States continues to lose ground compared to other industrialized nations.

Linda Darling-Hammond, an education professor at Stanford University

and a lead author of a new report from the Forum for Education and Democracy, says, “We’re treading water, and they’re swimming really fast” when discussing the progress other countries are making. It isn’t that America’s schools are not making progress. Jack Jennings, director of the Center on Education Policy, summed it up, “I don’t think there’s much doubt that public schools today are better than they were 20 or 30 years ago. The problem is that the demands are increasing, not just in the US but internationally, so we’re measuring ourselves against higher standards than we’ve ever measured ourselves.”

Darling-Hammond believes our schools are not keeping up with their international

competition primarily because of funding inequities and teaching quality. Roy Romer, the former governor of Colorado and chairman of Strong American Schools, said that A Nation at Risk highlighted three issues that remain a problem today: teaching, time, and standards.

Some experts disagree that the state of American education is at a crisis point. Lawrence Mishel, president of the Economic Policy Institute, says that A Nation at Risk "totally incorrectly assessed whether our education system was an economic detriment." As proof, he points to the fact that US productivity surged at just about the same time as students that were criticized in the report reached their prime.

There are other experts that believe A Nation at Risk "had the wrong problem and the wrong solutions." Marc Tucker, president of the National Center on Education and the Economy, believes the entire education system needs to be overhauled, not strengthened, as the report suggested. He believes we need a vastly different teacher pay scale and high school experience. The curriculum we use should emphasize creativity. "The big difference [between US schools and those in other countries] isn't in programs or in money, it's in the design of the system," he says. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0424/p01s07-usgn.html>

PODCAST: A PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE IN DC:

Michelle Rhee is asking a lot of DC's school principals. At Coolidge Senior High School, where less than a quarter of students are proficient in reading, Principal L. Nelson Burton has promised Rhee that he'll raise test scores by 33% by the end of the year. In this podcast, Burton discusses his challenges, including what he calls the school's "culture of mediocrity," dissatisfaction with his teaching staff, and a revolving door of principals and superintendents. <http://www.pbs.org/merrow/podcast/index.html>

PODCAST: A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD IN NEW ORLEANS

Paul Vallas has rolled out a laundry list of big initiatives that include extending the school day, merit-based pay and specialized high schools. These lofty goals, however, are met with the harsh realities of a high-needs community plagued by educational failure and poverty. In this podcast, Vallas discusses what he can do to ease problems outside of the school walls and level the playing field for all of his students. <http://www.pbs.org/merrow/podcast/index.html>

HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS: THE SILENT EPIDEMIC: THE 10-POINT PLAN

More than 100 organizations support these 10 action steps to reduce dropouts.

- 1. Support Accurate Graduation and Dropout Data:** Schools and communities cannot adequately address the dropout problem without an accurate account of it. The National Governors Association established a 50-state compact to ensure a common definition for high school graduation rates. These rates, and the data systems that will allow states to collect and publish graduation and dropout rates, should be made available at the district and school levels and the data should be disaggregated by racial and ethnic subgroups. States and school districts should set benchmarks for raising graduation rates and should monitor progress toward such goals.

- 2. Establish Early Warning Systems to Support Struggling Students:** Research shows that you can predict with 66% accuracy a student in elementary school who will go on to drop out from high school. Because dropping out of school is a slow process of disengagement for most students, we have an opportunity to identify and address early indicators that signal the need for more support for students to stay in school. High schools need to develop early warning systems to help them identify students who are in need of extra academic or other supports and to have strong partnerships with elementary and middle schools to ensure students stay on track.
- 3. Provide Adult Advocates and Student Supports:** Students need adult advocates who can help identify academic and personal challenges early and get students the support they need. Schools need to connect to communities in ways that offer a wide range of supplemental services and intensive assistance strategies for struggling students—attendance monitoring, school and peer counseling, mentoring, tutoring, double class periods, internships, service learning, summer school programs, after school programs, and more—with strong adult advocates who can help identify academic and personal crises early and get students the support they need from schools and communities.
- 4. Support Parent Engagement and Individualized Graduation Plans:** Research shows that parents' engagement in their children's school lives results in multiple benefits to the students, such as improved school attendance, educational performance, classroom behavior, and emotional well-being. Parental involvement also provides benefits to schools, such as more parental support for the mission of their children's school, a better understanding among parents of their roles, and more overall support for schools among parents. Schools and parents need to strengthen their interactions around student performance. Schools should also develop an individualized graduation plan for each student, have the expectation that students will graduate ready for college and the workforce and regularly communicate with parents about progress towards completing such a plan.
- 5. Establish a Rigorous College and Work Preparatory Curriculum for High School Graduation:** Students taking a rigorous core curriculum in high school are better prepared to succeed in college and in the workforce than students taking less challenging coursework. States and schools need to have high standards for all students and tie high school graduation requirements to the expectations of colleges and employers.
- 6. Provide Supportive Options for Struggling Students to Meet Rigorous Expectations:** Student learning needs and styles differ widely; in response, states and districts should develop support options that allow all students to graduate from high school prepared for college and the workplace. These choices may include 9th grade academies that support entering freshmen, second chance schools where student dropouts can continue earning course credit, and other entirely new school models that combine personalized learning environments with high expectations. Schools should establish safe school environments, expand choices for students to make school more relevant to their lives and goals, and promptly address their special needs to keep them on track for graduating.

- 7. Raise Compulsory School Age Requirements under State Laws:** Most states passed their compulsory school age requirements in the late 19th or early 20th century when the country had a very different economy, permitting students to leave school at 16 or 17 to enter the workforce. Over the last decade, many states have raised their compulsory school age from 16 to 18, recognizing that a high school education is the minimum required to compete in today's global economy. Research supports the relationship between raising the compulsory school age and reducing the dropout rate.
- 8. Expand College Level Learning Opportunities in High School:** Dual enrollment, early college programs, and Advanced Placement (AP) programs allow high school students to earn credit toward high school and college simultaneously. States and school districts should expand access to these programs.
- 9. Focus the Research and Disseminate Best Practices:** The Government Accountability Office noted that while states and school districts have implemented numerous interventions designed to increase high school graduation rates, there has been too little focus at the national level to evaluate and disseminate existing research and best practices. Clearinghouses of well-evaluated best practices should be established to assist states and schools.
- 10. Make Increasing High School Graduation and College and Workforce Readiness a National Priority:** Local, state and federal policymakers, educators and students should be brought together with experts and innovators through national and state summits, regional and local conferences and public forums in schools and communities to discuss the incidence of, causes of and solutions to the dropout epidemic. All avenues to invest leaders in a better understanding of the problem and common solutions should be undertaken to focus national attention on the dropout epidemic. (source: silentepidemic.org)

SOME WEB SITES FOR EDUCATORS AND/OR STUDENTS

CCSSO Secondary School Redesign Web Portal

The Council of Chief State School Officers recently launched the Secondary School Redesign Web Portal. The web site provides a collection of existing resources, tools, and practices produced by state education agencies and others to bolster and inform secondary school redesign initiatives.

<http://highschool.ccsso.org/web/guest/home>

Using Technology With Marzano's Instructional Strategies

This fabulous resource answers the question of how technology can be implemented with Marzano strategies to improve student learning. The site is divided into nine "chapters" that correspond to the research-based Marzano strategies. The chapters include Identifying Similarities and Differences , Summarizing and Note-Taking , Reinforcing Effort and Providing Recognition , Increasing Value in Homework and Practice , Using Non-Linguistic Representations , Incorporating Cooperative Learning Effectively , Setting Objectives and Providing Feedback, Generating and Testing Hypotheses , & Utilizing Question, Cues, & Advance Organizers . Each chapter includes a brief summary & then offers targeted & ready to use templates, graphic organizers,

& online activities for implementation. Ideas & examples use tools already in the classroom: PowerPoint, Inspiration/Kidspiration, Word, Excel, Internet, etc. Clicking examples gives you information on using the technology or provides an interactive application to create your own for class use. <http://gets.gc.k12.va.us/VSTE/2008/>

60 Second Shakespeare

This BBC site is great for the Shakespeare teacher/student or simply the Shakespeare fan. It includes all of Shakespeare's most famous plays done up in student-friendly and attractive, attention-getting form. The challenge was for students to develop their own '60-second' bit of Shakespeare. The site includes examples of different formats and offers everything from teacher lesson plans to "master classes" in teaching students how to do things such as audios, films, and photo slideshows as well as the more common newspaper articles and acting classes. The site also allows viewers to "vote" on their favorite renditions. This website requires Windows Media Player or Real Player. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/drama/shakespeare/60secondshakespeare/index.shtml>

Seeing Reason: Mindful Mapping of Cause and Effect

Develop your students' thinking skills with Intel's free "Seeing Reason" tool to analyze cause-and-effect relationships in complex systems. Students can use the Seeing Reason Tool to develop visual maps of the factors and relationships in cause-and-effect investigations. Student-created causal maps make thinking visible and promote collaboration as they work together to refine their understanding. Teachers can use Seeing Reason as a monitoring and observation tool, since the maps are visual representations of student understanding. <http://educate.intel.com/en/thinkingtools/seeingreason/>

This web-based tool is accompanied by detailed lesson plans for different grade levels and subject areas. It provides a complete project, ready to adapt for the classroom or implement as-is. Explore the project ideas, instructional strategies, assessment tips, and research to help you plan a project of your own. Registration is free and creates a teacher workspace in which to build the class project. The password-protected workspace is accessed through the internet where students log on with the teacher-created ID, team ID, and password. <http://education.intel.com/en/thinkingtools/seeingreason/>

Academic Integrity

This is an incredibly rich site for teaching and learning about resources, plagiarism, and writing a research paper. Although geared for Ryerson University students, all students can access the animated "story" told in episodes and many of the resources discussed in the story. Particularly helpful for students are such resources as the Assignment Calculator, which helps plan when to do what, and reference sources to access online. The key draw to this site, however, are the stories which cover unintentional plagiarism, buying or borrowing coursework, cheating on tests and exams, forging/misrepresentation & unauthorized group work, and group work. All of the episodes use the same characters and teachers can download the scripts

to preview or use at their discretion as supplemental. Note: the interactive quizzes offered at the end of the series are not accessible to non-Ryerson students. This website requires Flash. <http://www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity/>

Radical Math

This site is a resource for educators interested in integrating issues of economic and social justice into their mathematics classes and curriculum. The site has links to access and download over 700 lesson plans, articles, charts, graphs, data sets, maps, books, and web sites. <http://www.radicalmath.org>

Teacher Book Wizard

Wizards perform magical feats, and this book wizard proves to be equally super. While sponsored by Scholastic, Teacher Book Wizard is built on a database of 50,000 books from all publishers. There are tools that allow you to choose your own leveling system, and then match the student to a whole list of books. You will find ready-made, themed lists as well. Teachers can create their own book lists to share with other teachers. Use the BookAlike tool to see what books are similar to a particular well-loved book. Matching the right book to each individual student has never been easier. The Book Wizard Tour requires Flash. <http://bookwizard.scholastic.com/tbw/homePage.do>

Mysterious Places: Ancient Civilizations, Modern Mysteries

Students are always fascinated by the mysteries of the past, and wondering how those in ancient history managed feats of construction that would be difficult even today. Perhaps nothing sparks student interest more than the phrase, "no one knows". This site seeks to explore several "mysterious places" in the world--places whose origins or purposes are lost to antiquity. In addition, the sponsors of the site hope to raise money to ensure these monuments are not endangered in the future. Currently, the featured locations include Easter Island, Stonehenge, the dwellings of the Tellem people of Mali, West Africa, and the Mayan cities of Mexico (still under construction). Each section contains stunning photography, and a variety of resources on the history and mystery of the site. A section entitled "educator link" promises lesson plans and other teachers' resources, but is not finished. The site offers great potential, some of which has already been realized. It's worth checking out now, and perhaps in the future when more of its resources are up and running. This site requires Flash. <http://www.mysteriousplaces.com/index2.html>

UPCOMING EVENT

PASSPORT TO CAREER ACADEMIES

The 12th Annual National Career Academy Conference

When: November 8-10, 2008

Where: Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront

225 East Coast Line Drive

Jacksonville, Florida 32202

Phone:(904) 588-1234 Fax:(904) 634-4554

What: More than 70 high-powered sessions organized around the ten National Standards of Practice for academies. You will have the opportunity to develop, explore and network so you can move academies and smaller learning communities to the highest level. Plus pre-conference workshops and optional school visits.

<http://ncacinc.com/>

CONTESTS, AWARDS, & FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Youth Grants to Preserve Community History

The History Channel Save Our History Grant Program inspires youth to become the preservationists in their communities. Museums, historic sites, historical societies, preservation organizations, libraries and archives are invited to partner with a local school or youth group and apply for funding to help preserve the history of their communities. Maximum Award: \$10,000. Eligibility: 501(c)(3) history organizations. Deadline: June 6, 2008.

[http://www.history.com/minisite.do?](http://www.history.com/minisite.do?content_type=Minisite_Generic&content_type_id=51650&display_order=3&mini_id=51103)

[content_type=Minisite_Generic&content_type_id=51650&display_order=3&mini_id=51103](http://www.history.com/minisite.do?content_type=Minisite_Generic&content_type_id=51650&display_order=3&mini_id=51103)

PSA Contest for Youth

The By Kids For Kids youth empowerment company and [DoSomething.org](http://www.dosomething.org) announce the Advertise Your Cause Media Challenge, which encourages young people to discover what cause matters most to them and then "Do Something" to propel their cause into the public eye. The competition will reward the cleverest and powerful new Public Service Announcement (PSA) campaign idea that will also have the broadest impact. Maximum Award: \$10,000 and national media exposure for the winning PSA. Eligibility: U.S. residents ages 5 to 19, not graduated from high school at the time of competition. Deadline: June 30, 2008.

<http://www.bkfk.com/Modules/Competition/Competition.aspx?section=sayit>

Award for Emerging Education Leaders

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development is seeking nominations for its Outstanding Young Educator Award, which recognizes a teacher under the age of 40 who demonstrates excellence in his or her profession, a positive impact on students, creativity in the classroom, and leadership in his or her school or district. Maximum Award: \$10,000. Eligibility: K-12 teachers under age 40; no self-nominations accepted. Deadline: August 1, 2008.

[http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/menuitem.](http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/menuitem.749fb3b35fb740a98d7ea23161a001ca/template.article?articleMgmtId=e87c3f4062520010VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD)

[749fb3b35fb740a98d7ea23161a001ca/template.article?](http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/menuitem.749fb3b35fb740a98d7ea23161a001ca/template.article?articleMgmtId=e87c3f4062520010VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD)

[articleMgmtId=e87c3f4062520010VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD](http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/menuitem.749fb3b35fb740a98d7ea23161a001ca/template.article?articleMgmtId=e87c3f4062520010VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD)

NEA Foundation's Student Achievement Grant

The NEA Foundation provides grants 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.

Eligible applicants are PreK-12 public school teachers, public school education support professionals, or faculty or staff at public higher education institutions. Preference will be given to applicants who serve economically disadvantaged students. Preference will also be given to members of the National Education Association. In addition, NEA Foundation is particularly interested in receiving grant applications from teachers with less than seven years of experience. Grants of \$5,000 will be awarded. Applications must be received by June 6, 2008. TIME SENSITIVE! http://www.neafoundation.org/programs/StudentAchievement_Guidelines.htm

Dollar General Back-to-School Grants

The Dollar General Back-to-School grants provide funding to assist schools in meeting some of the financial challenges they face in implementing new programs or purchasing new equipment, materials, or software for their school library or literacy program. Funding requests must be used to enhance or expand the school's library, media center, or literacy programs.

Applicants must be nonprofits and located in Dollar General's 35-state operating territory and must be within 20 miles of the nearest Dollar General store. Grants of up to \$5,000 will be made.

Applications must be submitted by no later than June 12, 2008. <http://www.dollargeneral.com/Community/Documents/Back-to-School%20grants%20application%202008.pdf>

Mazda Foundation

The Mazda Foundation awards grants to programs promoting education and literacy; environmental conservation; cross-cultural understanding; social welfare; or scientific research.

Grants are awarded according to the nature and need of the program. The total operating budget of the Mazda Foundation is approximately \$400,000 each fiscal year. From 2001 – 2005, 43% of grants made were for education; 26% for social welfare; 15% for cross-cultural understanding; 12% for environmental conservation; and 4% for scientific research.

Organizations without 501(c)(3) designations are not eligible to apply.

Applications must be submitted by no later than July 1, 2008.

<http://www.mazdafoundation.org/grantguidelines.html>

Mattel Children's Foundation: Domestic Grantmaking Program

Through its Domestic Grantmaking Program, Mattel and the Mattel Children's Foundation accept unsolicited applications for programs that directly and effectively impact children with demonstrated needs (physical, financial, emotional, and health-related). Of most interest are programs that promote learning, health, and girl empowerment. Both program-specific and core operating support grants will be made.

Eligible applicants are 501(c)(3) public charities that serve children in communities within the United States. There is an online eligibility quiz that will allow you to determine your organization's eligibility.

Grants will range from \$5,000 to \$25,000.

Online applications must be submitted by July 15, 2008. http://www.mattel.com/About_Us/Philanthropy/ci_mcf_philanthropy_grantmaking.asp

AIAA Foundation Classroom Grant

The AIAA Foundation's Classroom Grants provide up to \$200 for the development and/or application of science, mathematics, and technology in a teacher's curriculum. The grants can be used for classroom demonstration kits and science supplies, math and science software, graphing calculators, supplies for making flying objects (what kid can resist the chance to build and launch a rocket?), supplies for robotic programs, and other materials to help you make science, mathematics, and technology come alive in your classroom.

Every K-12 teacher is eligible for a grant of up to \$200. Schools are limited to up to \$1,000 per calendar year. Applicants must become an AIAA Educator Associate.

There is no cost for membership.

Applications must be submitted by July 31, 2008 for review in September. <http://www.aiaa.org/content.cfm?pageid=244>

Toshiba America Foundation

Toshiba America Foundation is a nonprofit grant-making organization dedicated to supporting science and mathematics education in the United States. The Foundation contributes to the quality of science and mathematics education by investing in projects designed by classroom teachers to improve instruction for students in grades 7-12.

Public schools, nonprofit organizations, & private schools (nonprofit) are eligible applicants.

A total of approximately \$500,000 is available for grantmaking.

Applications for grants of under \$5,000 are made on a rolling basis. Applications for grants in excess of \$5,000 must be submitted by no later than August 1, 2008.

http://www.toshiba.com/tafpub/upload/page/100183/TAF_7-12_APPLICATION.doc

Actuarial Foundation: Advancing Student Achievement Mentoring Program

Actuarial Foundation – through its Advancing Student Achievement Mentoring program – awards monetary grants to schools & groups throughout the United States. Advancing Student Achievement is a grant program that brings together actuaries & educators in local classroom environments with the belief that interaction with real-world mentors will boost students' interest & achievement in math. The Actuarial Foundation can provide a local network of actuaries ready to participate, as well as suggestions on how to integrate math concepts from the workplace into the classroom. Groups applying for grants will be given wide latitude in designing programs that enhance learning and create a "love of math" in each student.

All schools & groups willing to undertake a math mentoring program that involves local actuaries as volunteers are eligible. However, in order for a program to be viable, there must be a sufficient population of volunteer actuaries within easy traveling distance. See map at <http://www.actuarialfoundation.org/grant/is.html> to determine the number of participating actuaries in your state. You do not have to enlist the assistance of an actuary prior to applying for a grant.

There are no guidelines regarding award amounts. Previously awarded grants have been for as much as \$38,000. There is no deadline for your application but if you plan to start your program at the beginning of a semester, you should complete the application at least one or two months prior to that date. <http://www.actuarialfoundation.org/grant/what.html>

Toyota International Teacher Program

Toyota International Teacher Program allows participants to explore the Galapagos Islands and work in groups with Galapagueño teachers on the design of interdisciplinary environmental lessons. These lessons will be shared with the education community. Maximum Award: a fully funded 12-day study tour of the Galapagos Islands November 22 to December 6, 2008. Eligibility: full time U.S. classroom teachers or teacher-librarians in grades six to 12. Deadline: May 8, 2008. <http://www.iie.org/Template.cfm?&Template=/programs/toyota/default.htm>

Musical Instruments for Existing K-12 Music Programs

Mr. Holland's Opus Melody Program provides musical instruments and instrument repairs to existing K-12 school music programs that have no other source of financing additional musical instruments and materials. Eligibility: music programs that take place during the regular school day. Schools must have an established instrumental music program (i.e., concert band, marching band, jazz band and/or orchestra) that is at least three years old. Maximum Award: \$8,000. Deadline: August 1, 2008.

<http://www.mhopus.org/apply.htm>

National Environmental Education Foundation Grants

The National Environmental Education Foundation recently launched Classroom Earth, an initiative to increase environmental literacy at the high school level. The group is offering grants from \$5,000 to \$10,000 for teachers who want to incorporate environmental topics either in a single course or integrated across three or more courses. Grants are also available for teachers who want to receive training that will support their inclusion of environmental education. A description of the grants can be found at www.neefusa.org/programs/ce_grant.htm. Proposals are due by June 20, 2008.