

CASN NEWS - October 2009

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"To find our way to the future, the skills, the insight, and the productivity of every American.....We need a national education strategy to assure that America can advance, not retreat, in the global economy in the years ahead...We are past the point where we can afford only to talk the talk without walking the walk."

-- Senator Ted Kennedy

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ANNOUNCES RACE TO THE TOP COMPETITION

Guidelines for the \$4.35 billion Race to the Top competitive grant competition have been issued. States that have embraced reform and innovation will be eligible to compete. The national competition will highlight and replicate effective education reform strategies in four significant areas:

- Adopting internationally benchmarked standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace;
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals;
- Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices; and
- Turning around our lowest-performing schools.

"This competition will not be based on politics, ideology, or the preferences of a particular interest group. Instead, it will be based on a simple principle—whether a state is ready to do what works. We will use the best data available to determine whether a state can meet a few key benchmarks for reform—and states that outperform the rest will be rewarded with a grant. Not every state will win and not every school district will be happy with the results. But America's children, America's economy, and America itself will be better for it," President Obama said.

In addition to the Race to the Top Fund, over the coming months the U.S. Department of Education plans to award more than \$5.6 billion in additional grants through several other federal programs that support the Obama administration's reform priorities. Draft regulations should be published over the next several months. It is crucial for state officials to prepare to use money from all of the various funding streams in an integrated way to achieve the goals of reform and innovation goals of the administration.

Among the other programs that will soon be available are:

- Investing in Innovation Fund: \$650 million. Supports local efforts by school districts and partnerships with nonprofits to start or expand research-based innovative programs that help close the achievement gap and improve outcomes for students.
- Teacher Incentive Fund: \$297 million. Funds the creation or expansion of effective performance pay and teacher advancement models to reward teachers and principals for increases in student achievement and boost the number of effective educators working with poor, minority, and disadvantaged students and teaching hard-to-staff subjects.
- Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems program: \$315 million. Allows states to expand their data systems to track students' achievement from preschool through college and link their achievement to teachers and principals. (Applications for this program are currently available.)
- Title I School Improvement grants: \$3.5 billion. Supports states in efforts to reform struggling schools, and focuses on implementing turnaround models in the lowest-performing schools.
- State Educational Technology Grants: \$919 million. Help bring technology into the classroom. The funds will be distributed to states on a formula basis. States must subgrant at least half of their awards to districts using a competitive process.

The Department will finalize the regulations and start accepting applications for the Race to the Top competition this fall. The first round of grants will go out early next year. The second round of applications will likely be due in June 2010 and final awards will be made in September.

"States will have two chances to win," Duncan said. "They have plenty of time to learn from the first-round winners, change laws where necessary, build partnerships with all key stakeholders, and advance bold and creative reforms."

<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2009/07/07242009.html>

DUNCAN URGES MOVING FORWARD ON ESEA REAUTHORIZATION

In his first major speech focused on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Education Secretary Arne Duncan told education stakeholders this week that school reform cannot wait and he wants the law reauthorized in 2010.

While crediting the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) with exposing achievement gaps and expanding the standards and assessment movement, Duncan criticized NCLB for placing too much emphasis on standardized tests, unfairly labeling many schools as failures, and not accounting for student growth in its accountability measure. "But the biggest problem with NCLB," said Duncan, "is that it doesn't

encourage high learning standards. In fact, it inadvertently encourages states to lower them. The net effect is that we are lying to children and parents by telling kids they are succeeding when, in fact, they are not.

The Department will be developing its ESEA reauthorization proposal over the next several months. Certainly the priorities of the ARRA stimulus money and the proposed Race to the Top grant criteria (i.e., higher standards, more effective teachers, better data systems, and proven turnaround strategies) will help form the basis of this plan. More broadly, Duncan outlined his vision for ESEA. "In my view, we should be tight on the goals—with clear standards set by states that truly prepare young people for college and careers—but we should be loose on the means for meeting those goals.

We must be flexible and accommodating as states and districts—working with parents, non-profits and other external partners—develop educational solutions. We should be open to new ideas, encourage innovation, and build on what we know works. We don't believe that local educators need a prescription for success. But they do need a common definition of success—focused on student achievement, high school graduation and success and attainment in college."

A Full transcript of Duncan's remarks and information on the "Listening and Learning" forums is available at the U.S. Department of Education website.

DRAFT OF COLLEGE AND CAREER-READINESS STANDARDS RELEASED BY COMMON CORE INITIATIVE

The Common Core Standards Initiative has released the official draft of their college and career-readiness standards, available at www.corestandards.org. The public is being given 30 days to provide comment and feedback on the draft standards (the deadline for submitting input is October 21, 2009). After the committee finalizes the college and career-readiness standards, after which work will begin on the reading and math standards.

GRADUATION PROMISE ACT (GPA) REINTRODUCED

Legislation to stem high school dropout rates, the Graduation Promise Act (GPA) was reintroduced this week by Sen. Jeff Bingman (D-NM). The GPA would provide \$2.5 billion annually in competitive grants to states and districts to identify and help turn around high schools with low graduation and student achievement rates.

GPA is the companion legislation to the Secondary School Innovation Fund Act (SSIF). SSIF would fund \$500 million worth of competitive grants to states and districts each year for innovative models and programs such as dual enrollment, expanded learning time, and work-based learning that improve middle and high school student achievement and prepare students for success in postsecondary education and the workforce.

SENATOR TOM HARKIN IS NEW CHAIR OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR AND PENSIONS COMMITTEE

Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) is the new chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, succeeding Ted Kennedy (D-MA) who passed away in August. In the education world, Harkin is best known for championing the cause of students with disabilities, school building modernization, and improving school meal nutrition standards.

MANY FEELING EFFECTS OF AXED SUMMER PROGRAMS

About a quarter of school districts cut summer and after-school programs this year, a threefold increase from 2008, according to a March survey of more than 800 administrators nationwide. And districts that applied for federal stimulus money didn't receive the funds in time to restart or save their summer programs. With fewer summer learning programs available, it is feared that many students, particularly those from a low-income background, will fall even further behind over the summer break. *source: Wall Street Journal*

COMMUNITY COLLEGES FACE TOUGH CHOICES

Community colleges around the nation face tough choices on how many students they can actually serve. As increasing numbers of students turn to less-expensive two-year colleges to advance their college/career/personal goals, state governments facing budget crises are slashing aid to higher education. As a result, community college leaders, with their traditional commitment to open enrollment, are facing crucial, painful decisions. College is becoming less affordable at a time when attending college is becoming more necessary for success in life.

CLEVELAND STEM STUDENTS ATTEND CLASSES AT SCIENCE HUBS

Freshmen at Cleveland's MC STEM High School will attend class at the Great Lakes Science Center. The year-round public high school opened last year and offers career-focused education in science, technology, engineering and math at nontraditional sites. Tenth-grade students, the school's inaugural class, are housed at General Electric's Nela Park campus in East Cleveland. Employees there mentor and tutor students, and school officials are looking to set up something similar at a NASA research center. (Source: Cleveland Plain Dealer)

AN ODD TRIO TOURS TO PROMOTE EDUCATION

Rev. Al Sharpton and former Republican Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich are joining ranks with Secretary of Education Arne Duncan on a tour that will include Baltimore, New Orleans, Philadelphia, and other cities, urging districts to fix failing schools. The Associated Press reports that the tour, which grew out of a meeting at the White House in May, is part of a larger strategy by the administration to put education reform at the forefront. Asked on NBC's "Today" show why they had decided to partner, Mr. Gingrich responded that the Rev. Sharpton had it "exactly

right, that education has to be the Number One civil right of the 21st century," adding, "we can't get it done as a partisan issue." Mr. Gingrich has been especially approving of the administration's stance on charter schools -- a position somewhat divisive for the Democratic base. For his part, the Rev. Sharpton said it was now time to "change the conversation ... to say we need to put everybody's hands on the table." He believes that "if there's anything Americans should be mature enough about to have a decent conversation [about], it's the education of their children."

BID FOR GRANT MONEY BRINGS TEACHERS' UNION & DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION CLOSER

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is looking at teacher effectiveness. Over the next five years, the foundation will spend half a billion dollars in its quest to figure out what qualities make the best teachers, and how those qualities can be measured in the classroom. The project will include research to develop and test methods used to rate teachers, and experiments in selected school districts on recruiting, training, assigning, and assessing teachers. Measures will include putting strong teachers in challenging classrooms, having them mentor and coach others while keeping them in front of children, making tenure a meaningful milestone, getting rid of ineffective teachers, and using money to motivate people and schools to move toward these goals. Foundation officials say they have been impressed with the thought put into proposals by applicant districts and how clear it was that teacher's unions, school officials, and elected school board members were working in concert to draft ideas. Pittsburgh Superintendent Mark Roosevelt found the application process in and of itself moved his district forward. "I'd say we made almost ten years of progress with our union in three months," he said. "It was like a door had been opened that we didn't know was in the wall anymore." NOTE: The five finalists to serve as a learning lab to test quality teaching methodologies include: Hillsborough County, Memphis, Omaha, Pittsburgh, and a group of Los Angeles charter schools.

EVERY STUDENT IN AP PSYCHOLOGY CLASS ACES TEST

Every student in Sarah Smilowitz's Advanced Placement Psychology class at Central High School in Memphis, Tenn., passed the national AP test, scoring higher than any other students in the city's schools. "We have amazing students. They want to be recognized for the good they do," Smilowitz says. Last year, 85% of her class passed the test, an achievement for minority students recognized by the National College Board.

STUDY: A LONG VIEW STRATEGY TO INCREASE MINORITY AP ENROLLMENT

Recent research from the Journal of Policy Analysis and Management explores the wide disparities in advanced high school course-taking among race, poverty, and

gender groups in Florida. The study finds that black and Latino students are less likely to enroll in advanced courses like Advanced Placement than their white peers because they arrive to high school with lower scores on eighth-grade statewide exams. When black and Latino students have the same eighth-grade test scores as whites, they are more likely than white students to enroll in these courses. Gaps in pre-high school performance explain much of the advantage of non-poor students over poor students, but don't appear to drive the higher rates of advanced course-taking among Asians and females. Despite concerns that schools serving minority and low-income students don't offer advanced courses, the report found few such disparities in Florida. In fact, Florida's black and Latino students attend schools more likely to offer advanced courses than do white students. The authors therefore support greater investments in disadvantaged children long before they enter high school, and suggest that a reallocation of students to different high schools is unlikely to remedy racial disparities in course-taking and may, in fact, increase them. (source: Journal of Policy Analysis and Management www.appam.org/publications/jpam/about.asap)

STUDY: SUPPORT FOR LATE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES PAYS OFF

According to a policy guide from the Center for Public Education, the extra work that late graduates and their schools put toward earning a diploma pays off, not only in academic outcomes but in every aspect of life. The center drew these conclusions by looking at the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, which followed a nationally representative sample of eighth graders through high school, college, and the workforce until the year 2000. The results, they write, show that when data are controlled to compare students of equivalent socioeconomic status and achievement level, late graduates come close to on-time graduates in achievement. The center defines these students as taking more than four years to graduate high school, more likely to be minority or language minority, living in poorer households, and with two or more risk factors associated with dropping out. These students end middle school and start high school with skills comparable to those who eventually drop out or receive a GED, but start making better grades, though their achievement on standardized tests stays mainly the same, and may simply show more persistence. Accordingly, "schools should be encouraged, through accountability systems, to keep all students in school until they graduate -- whether or not it takes longer than four years. It takes time and resources for schools to continue working with late graduates, but these efforts should be encouraged, not discouraged." See centerforpubliceducation.org for a link to the report.

TOOLS FOR TEACHING RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS

As part of an effort to improve the teaching of students of color, the Southern Poverty Law Center's Teaching Tolerance program has launched a new online

initiative. The Teaching Diverse Students Initiative (TDSi) offers interactive multimedia tools to help educators improve learning opportunities and outcomes for racially and ethnically diverse students. TDSi is a set of professional development tools specifically designed to improve teaching practices and school conditions that, while important for all students, are especially productive for students of color. TDSi's resources include learning activities, case studies, video of effective practice, reports and articles, and video commentary by leading researchers. TDSi tools are available free of charge. See the TDSi link at the <http://www.teachingtolerance.org> web site.

A WEB RESOURCE FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS ePALS

ePals is a global community which offers students the chance to connect with other students around the world (200+ countries). National Geographic is one of the sponsors and there is built-in language translation! This content-rich site also offers lessons, interactives, and downloadable materials. The "Focus Areas" include Biodiversity, Black History, Election/ Inauguration, Geography Central, and Human Rights. In addition, you can click on the "Projects" link to find several ready to use projects (Habitats, Maps, Natural Disasters, Water, and others). Click on "ePals Tour" to view an informative video clip about the site, downloadable brochures, and more. This site requires Flash and Adobe Acrobat. <http://www.epals.com>

FUNDING AND AWARD OPPORTUNITIES

2010 Spirit of Innovation Awards

This Conrad Foundation awards program is an annual competition that challenges teams of high school students to create innovative products for use in one of four categories: aerospace exploration, space nutrition, renewable energy, and green schools. Teams and their coaches will compete for more than \$100,000 in cash prizes; be designated as Pete Conrad Scholars; have the opportunity to commercialize their products for general market use; and receive annual memberships to the Conrad Foundation, Sigma Xi, the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA), and the National Science Teachers Association—the Foundation's official education advisor. Deadline: December 15, 2009
<http://www.conradawards.com>

Coleopterists Society's Youth Incentive Award

This international organization of professionals and hobbyists interested in the study of beetles has a program to recognize young people (grades 7–12) studying beetles. The society provides \$150 grants and credit toward equipment from BioQuip Products, along with a one-year subscription to the society's journal, The Coleopterists Bulletin. The proposed activities or projects will be evaluated on their

degree of creativity, educational benefit to the applicant, scientific merit, feasibility, and budgetary planning. Deadline: November 15, 2009
http://www.coleopsoc.org/default.asp?Action=Show_S...

GreenWorks! Grants

Through its service-learning program GreenWorks!, Project Learning Tree provides grants up to \$5,000 to schools and youth organizations for environmental projects. Proposals for the Fall 2009 cycle of grants are due on October 30, 2009. Students "learn by doing" through community action projects they design to improve an aspect of their neighborhood's environment. Deadline: October 30, 2009
http://www.plt.org/cms/pages/21_22_18.html

President's Environmental Youth Awards (PEYA)

This EPA-sponsored program recognizes young people across America for projects demonstrating their commitment to the environment. Visit the Web site for project examples, submission guidelines, eligibility requirements, and application. Deadline: December 31, 2009
<http://www.epa.gov/enviroed/peya/index.html>

Sea World & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund

Grants of up to \$25,000 will be awarded to US and international nonprofits, government agencies, zoos, aquariums, and higher education institutions working to conserve, protect, or rehabilitate wildlife. Deadline: December 1, 2009
<http://www.swbg-conservationfund.org/>

Toyota Tapestry Grants

The Toyota Tapestry Grants program offers grants to K-12 science teachers for innovative projects that will enhance science education during the 2010-11 school year. The program will award 50 large grants and a minimum of 20 mini-grants, totaling \$550,000 in all, for projects in the categories of Physical Science Application, Environmental Science Education, and Integrating Literacy and Science. Deadline: January 18, 2010
<http://www.nsta.org/pd/tapestry>

Youth Service America/NEA: Youth Leaders for Literacy

Youth Service America is partnering with the National Education Association to offer Youth Leaders for Literacy grants to young people who offer innovative ways to increase literacy skills and appreciation for reading among their peers. Successful projects will be youth-led and address an established literacy need in the applicant's school or community. The projects will follow the framework of YSA's Semester of

Service initiative, launching on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service in January and culminating on Global Youth Service Day, April 23-25, 2010. An activity should also occur during the NEA's Read Across America Day on March 2, 2010. Maximum award: \$500 cash and \$500 in books. Eligibility: children and youth, ages 5-25. Deadline: October 30, 2009.

<http://ysa.org/MyYSA/YSAContent/YSANews/tabid/219/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/183/YouthLeadersforLiteracyGrantsDeadlineOctober30.aspx>

Target Field Trip Grants

Target Field Trip Grants are available to fund scholastic outings in situations where monies are otherwise lacking. Maximum award: \$1,000. Eligibility: teachers, principals, paraprofessionals, and classified staff in K-12 public, private, or charter schools in the U.S. Deadline: November 3, 2009.

<https://targetfieldtripgrants.target.com/rules.php>