New Day for Learning *is a 21st century vision for education that seeks to re-imagine how, when and where young people learn. High-quality afterschool and summer learning opportunities for all young people are a critical part of this larger vision for what education—and learning—should and can be in this country.*

The following media clips are pulled from publications in the New Day for Learning *Communities and across the country. They are presented as a resource to highlight innovative programs and approaches to learning as well as to track education policy and the political landscape.*

Headlines 5.01.09 — 5.08.09

Article	Date	Headline	Publication	Author
1	5.09*	**Community schools: A rose by any other name** **Excerpt:** When U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan appeared on the "Charlie Rose Show" in mid-March, he outlined a vision for America's public schools that has enormous and positive implications for youth organizations across the country.	Youth Today	Jane Quinn
2	4.29.09*	**Initial aid is puzzle to track** **Excerpt:** States and federal agencies are off to a slow and uneven start in allowing the public to track the first allotments from up to $100 billion in new education funding under the federal economic-stimulus package, despite strong pledges of transparency for the program from the Obama administration.	Education Week	Michele McNeil
3	4.29.09*	**Denver schools advisor going national** **Excerpt:** Brad Jupp of Denver Public Schools has been tapped to serve as an advisor to U.S.	The Denver Post	Jeremy P. Meyer

Funded by the C.S. Mott Foundation

			Education Secretary Arne Duncan, according to an announcement Wednesday.		
	4	4.30.09*	**Obama's long education to-do list awaits action** **Excerpt:** In his first 100 days as president, Barack Obama has proposed a more expansive federal role in education from cradle to college.	Morning Edition, NPR	Claudio Sanchez
	5	5.01.09	**Reforming public education to be relevant to a career** **Excerpt:** As the late business intellect, Peter Drucker, once noted: "there's nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which shouldn't be done at all."	The Denver Post	Randy Johnson (Op Ed)
	6	5.01.09	**Flint, MI school board lays off 214 teachers, orders 8 schools closed to avoid $20M deficit** **Excerpt:** School officials have taken drastic steps to avoid a nearly $20 million deficit by laying off 214 teachers and closing eight schools.	AHN	Linda Young
	7	5.01.09	**Coming to the aid of art in school** **Excerpt:** "Thinking back to elementary school, what do you remember about it?" asks Randy Thomae, a father of two who is leading the fight to save Edison Elementary's art program. "Art, gym, music — those are the things you remember."	Denver Daily News	Gene Davis
	8	5.01.09	**Suddenly, kids find physics a magnetic field to study** **Excerpt:** At Portsmouth High School, the number of students signed up to take Advanced Placement science next year nearly doubled since 2006-07.	The Providence Journal	Julia Steiny

	9	5.01.09	**The 21st Century student: At ease with technology** **Excerpt:** According to the Nebraska State Activities Association, Omaha Westside High School is currently the eighth largest school in Nebraska with just under 1,500 students enrolled.	Beatrice Daily Sun (NE)	Chris Dunker
	10	5.01.09	**St. Paul district proposes closing 3 elementary programs, changing school choice system** **Excerpt:** Three elementary school programs would be shut down and the district would move to a regional model for school choice under draft recommendations released Thursday night by St. Paul Public Schools.	Pioneer Press	Doug Belden
	11	5.01.09	**NAACP to advise parents on improving schools** **Excerpt:** The NAACP will host a free conference on public education today to encourage parents to demand improvements from their schools so kids will be better equipped for college.	The Atlanta Journal-Constitution	D. Aileen Dodd
	12	5.01.09	**'No child left inside' promotes outdoor education** **Excerpt:** No child was to be left behind under the previous administration's education policy.	The Colorado Statesman	Kathrine Warren
	13	5.01.09	**Arne Duncan tells Education Writers Association: NCLB has to go (the name, not the law)** **Excerpt:** Secretary of Education Arne Duncan addressed the annual convention of the Education Writers Association in Washington, DC Thursday night, and he said that the name "No Child Left Behind" has to go.	The Notebook (Philadelphia Public School Blog)	Dale Mezzacappa
	14	5.02.09	**Putting students on the same high-performance page** **Excerpt:** What happens when you	Congressional Quarterly	Lydia Gensheimer

			have a law that's supposed to improve performance among the nation's school children but instead it creates confusion, lowers expectations and can result in a "dummying down" of state standards?		
	15	5.02.09	**State commissioner of higher education moving to South Dakota** **Excerpt:** Jack Warner, the state commissioner of higher education since 2002, is leaving to take a similar job in South Dakota, where he will be the executive director of the state's board of regents.	The Providence Journal	Linda Borg
	16	5.02.09	**Students master language skills** **Excerpt:** Two of the three Rs are improving — and the other doesn't have to do with the test.	The San Francisco Examiner	Andrea Koskey
	17	5.03.09	**Easy grades, failing grads** **Excerpt:** Some metro Atlanta public high schools that don't grade rigorously produce more graduates lacking the basic English and math skills needed for college, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution has found.	The Atlanta Journal-Constitution	Heather Vogell
	18	5.02.09	**Critics of Meria Carstarphen speak, hoping debate influences who succeeds her at helm of St. Paul schools** **Excerpt:** More than half the top administrators in place when Meria Carstarphen became St. Paul Public Schools superintendent in 2006 have left.	Pioneer Press	Doug Belden
	19	5.03.09	**Spring cleaning: Summer is for school, too** **Excerpt:** Our spring cleaning project for education requires brooms and a high tolerance for dust that has accumulated over generations.	The Denver Post	Van Schoales and Alan Gottlieb (Op Ed)

	20	5.03.09	**Turnaround a feather in cap of once-struggling student** **Excerpt:** In fourth grade, Enoch Pugh was in special education. He read poorly and struggled with his schoolwork. He was introverted and suffered from asthma.	Omaha World Herald	Paul Goodsell
	21	5.03.09	**New project seeks to improve schools** **Excerpt:** A new project in Charlotte is designed to create advocates for Mecklenburg's lowest-performing public schools.	The Charlotte Observer	Karen Sullivan
	22	5.03.09	**Ancient art is P.E. for the mind** **Excerpt:** The students in the phys ed class at Newton Conover Health Science High School lie still on the floor – some on their backs and some on their stomachs, eyes closed. A few doze.	The Charlotte Observer	Jeff Willhelm
	23	5.04.09	**World-class knowledge** **Excerpt:** Politicians fret these days about how U.S. students stack up in math and science compared with peers in India, China, Singapore and elsewhere.	The Washington Post	Maria Glod
	24	5.04.09	**Schools may trim the week to stretch funds; To cash-strapped districts, a four-day schedule beats cutting staff. But parents worry about child care.** **Excerpt:** Facing deep funding cuts during the economic downturn, increasing numbers of school districts nationwide are contemplating trimming the traditional school week to four days to save money.	Los Angeles Times	Nicholas Riccardi
	25	5.04.09	**Rare alliance may signal ebb in union's charter opposition** **Excerpt:** I didn't see many other reporters Tuesday in the narrow, second-floor meeting room of the	The Washington Post	Jay Mathews

		Phoenix Park Hotel in the District.		
26	5.04.09	**'No Child' in action** **Excerpt:** Student achievement results from the "nation's report card" published last week show that we are on the right track.	The Washington Post	Margaret Spellings (Op Ed)
27	5.04.09	**Local students get hands-on study of space** **Excerpt:** More than 780 Sheboygan area students will participate in numerous hands-on space-oriented science lab activities during Space Education Week at the Sheboygan Armory.	Sheboygan Press (WI)	Staff
28	5.04.09	**Stimulus funds up the ante for public schools** **Excerpt:** Handing $100 billion to needy public schools in an economic crisis is an unalloyed good thing, right?	USA Today	Greg Toppo
29	5.05.09	**Arne Duncan's Choice; 'What works' for some kids, but not for others.** **Excerpt:** Washington, D.C.'s school voucher program for low-income kids isn't dead yet. But the Obama Administration seems awfully eager to expedite its demise.	The Wall Street Journal	Editorial Board
30	5.05.09	**'High school dropout crisis' continues in U.S., study says** **Excerpt:** Nearly 6.2 million students in the United States between the ages of 16 and 24 in 2007 dropped out of high school, fueling what a report released Tuesday called "a persistent high school dropout crisis."	CNN	Staff
31	5.05.09	**Ohio governor: Economy linked with education** **Excerpt:** Ohio can only enter an economic revival by refusing to be deterred by financial obstacles and	Forbes	Stephen Majors

			by immediately reforming its out-of-date educational system, Gov. Ted Strickland said Monday in trying to rally support for his ambitious educational agenda.		
	32	5.05.09	**White House seeks comments on education law** **Excerpt:** Special education teacher Lynn Reichard has a problem with the federal No Child Left Behind law: Some of her kids cannot read, never mind pass its required state test.	The Washington Post	Libby Quaid
	33	5.05.09	**Student poll to guide OPS** **Excerpt:** Results of a first-of-its-kind poll released Tuesday will directly influence decisions made by the Omaha Public Schools.	Omaha World Herald	Michaela Saunders
	34	5.06.09	**Fixing No Child Left Behind a start in right directions** **Excerpt:** On Tuesday, U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan began a multi-state "listening tour" -- a warmup for the massive task that lies ahead: reauthorization later this year of the highly controversial federal No Child Left Behind law.	Chicago Sun-Times	Commentary
	35	5.06.09	**Classroom cop** **Excerpt:** Ron Huberman walked the halls at Julian High School on Chicago's South Side one day in late March. Students were loitering in the lobby, wearing caps backward and sideways.	Newsweek	Dirk Johnson
	36	5.06.09	**No child left to move ahead** **Excerpt:** Several years ago, when I taught Advanced Placement U.S. history, I had a student who grossly underperformed during the school year, yet somehow managed to score a 5 on the AP exam.	San Francisco Chronicle	Matt Levinson (Op Ed)
	37	5.06.09	**The Education Front: How Arne Duncan should spend the**	Dallas Morning News	William McKenzie

			stimulus money **Excerpt:** The Chicago Tribune recently ran an eye-catching column by James Hunt, the former Democratic governor of North Carolina, and Jeb Bush, the former GOP governor of Florida.		
	38	5.06.09	**DPS lays out its plans for federal cash** **Excerpt:** About $48 million in federal stimulus money will flow to Denver Public Schools over the next two years, which means more summer classes for some students this year and more training for teachers.	The Denver Post	Jeremy P. Meyer
	39	5.06.09	**School budget outlook a little brighter** **Excerpt:** The Charleston County School District's budget projections for next school year don't look nearly as dire as they did a couple of months ago.	The Post and Courier	Diette Courrege
	40	5.06.09	**Algebra missing in action in the middle schools** **Excerpt:** Eighth grade algebra—remember it? For many kids, it was the toughest class of middle school, full of terrifying pop quizes and solving for two unknowns from a system of equations. Oooh.	North Denver News	Guerin Lee Green
	41	5.06.09	**School districts find out their cut of stimulus** **Excerpt:** California school districts are about to get their first hard cash from the federal stimulus package, their share of the nearly $1.2 billion in extra funding the state has so far received for educating low-income children and students with disabilities.	San Francisco Chronicle	Nanette Asimov
	42	5.08.09	**Obama budget proposes increase for education** **Excerpt:** President Barack Obama's	Education Week	Alyson Klein

first budget proposal would boost U.S. Department of Education spending by 2.8 percent and provide substantial resources to turn around low-performing schools, reward effective teachers, and bolster early-childhood programs.

Education news from the 10 New Day for Learning *Communities, which are: Providence (RI), San Francisco (CA), Atlanta (GA), Charleston/North Charleston (SC), Chicago (IL), Denver (CO), Flint (MI), Omaha (NE), Peekskill (NY) and Saint Paul (MN).*

**While these articles did not appear during the week of 5.01.09 — 5.08.09, they have been included due to the relevant subject matter.*

Article 1 **Top**

Youth Today
Community schools: A rose by any other name
5.09

Jane Quinn

When U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan appeared on the "Charlie Rose Show" in mid-March, he outlined a vision for America's public schools that has enormous and positive implications for youth organizations across the country. "I think our schools should be open 12, 13, 14 hours a day," he said. "It's not just lengthening the school day, but offering a wide variety of after-school activities: drama, arts, sports, chess, debate, academic enrichment, programs for parents, GED, ESL, family literacy nights, potluck dinners."

Duncan explained that during his seven years as superintendent of schools in Chicago, "we attached health-care clinics to about a dozen of our schools. Where schools become centers of the community, great things happen. So I think we need the schools open much longer hours.

"And, by the way, we don't have to do this all ourselves as educators. We can bring in great nonprofits: the YMCAs, the Boys & Girls Clubs, mentoring and tutoring groups to co-locate their services and bolster the community from the school."

Is that a great invitation, or what? The CEO of the nation's public schools is exhorting youth workers and other community resources to partner with him in promoting the education and healthy development of America's young people. This is a refreshing change from the narrowness of federal education policy over the past eight years, which placed extraordinary pressure on school-based youth development programs to confine their efforts to tutoring and test prep activities.

To be sure, Duncan can't institute this change by fiat, given our strong tradition of local control and funding of schools in this country. But if No Child Left Behind has taught us anything, it is that federal education policy does indeed have an impact on local decision-making and implementation.

Fortunately, the youth development field is ready, with models and data, to help school districts fulfill Duncan's compelling blueprint. The past two decades have seen

the development, implementation and evaluation of several robust models of school-community partnerships, including Beacons, community schools, Healthy Start, Bridges to Success, Communities In Schools, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, university-assisted community schools and others. What all these models have in common is that they expand the hours, services and relationships of public schools, thus facilitating the development of "schools as centers of community."

In these models and others, schools generally partner with lead community-based organizations that provide and broker a wide range of supports, services and opportunities for students and their families, of the very kind Duncan described. In our own work in New York City, The Children's Aid Society is the lead agency in 20 community schools, partnering with the city Department of Education to bring needed services into the low-income neighborhoods of Washington Heights, East Harlem and the South Bronx. These partnerships have been sustained throughout seven changes of administration in the city public school system and during tough economic times, in part because of their impressive results.

Other initiatives around the country have demonstrated similar outcomes. A recent report from the Coalition for Community Schools, Community Schools Research Brief '09, can be useful to youth workers as they make the case for community schools. This research synthesis cites academic gains, increases in parental involvement, better student and teacher attendance, improved school climate and a host of positive youth development accomplishments, such as young people's heightened sense of responsibility to their communities. (See http://www.communityschools.org.)

Although some advocates were a bit dismayed that Duncan did not use the phrase "community schools" in his interview with Rose, we were all delighted that he described and supported the concept. More recently, during a March 25 interview published in Education Daily, Duncan responded to the question, "What education reforms do you want to see during your administration?" by saying: "It's really trying to redefine fundamentally what it means to be a school. So I think it means a longer day; I think it means all the values and principles around community schools."

No matter what you term this concept, the idea is clear: that schools cannot "do it alone," that they need partners like youth workers if they are to succeed in helping all of our children flourish as responsible and productive adults.

The federal stimulus bill (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) contains several provisions that appear likely to create opportunities for youth organizations to expand meaningful, long-term partnerships with public schools. Duncan has stated publicly that "this is a time to think big." OK, how about making every school a community school, by whatever name you want to call it.

Education Week
Initial aid is puzzle to track
4.29.09

Michele McNeil

Transparency Proves Elusive as Stimulus Funds Flow

States and federal agencies are off to a slow and uneven start in allowing the public to track the first allotments from up to $100 billion in new education funding under the federal economic-stimulus package, despite strong pledges of transparency for the program from the Obama administration.

Although about $145 million in aid has been sent from the U.S. Department of Education to states and local districts so far, most states' "recovery" Web sites contain only general information about the stimulus program and no information on the money that's flowed into their states.

Recovery.gov, the federal government's main online portal on the stimulus is still without any state-by-state information on money that's already filtered down from federal agencies to the states, and most Education Department spending data are buried in Excel spreadsheets deep in the departmental Web site.

"There's always a trade-off between immediacy and accuracy," said Sandra Abrevaya, a spokeswoman for the Education Department. "We don't want to put things up so early that we end up having to revise them."

The expectations for public information about the stimulus program have been set extremely high, from President Barack Obama on down.

"The president has made it clear that every taxpayer dollar spent on our economic recovery must be subject to unprecedented levels of transparency and accountability," reads the transparency section of recovery.gov.

And U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has made similar promises, including in an interview last month with Education Week.

"There's never been such transparency," he said. "We'll be tracking state by state and district by district how money is being spent."

Early Steps

With the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act not even three months old, state and federal officials are still trying to figure out what to report, in what detail, and when. In fact federal officials were set to start hosting a weeklong online forum on April 27 through recovery.gov to discuss how the Web site can be better used to track money. The Education Department also has plans to ramp up its Web site with more information.

Government watchdog groups that track federal money say there's a lot of room to improve—from making information more user-friendly, to requiring standard, more detailed reporting by states, local governments, and school districts.

But it's encouraging that the transparency bar has been set high, said Marthena Cowart, the director of communications for the Washington-based Project on Government Oversight.

"We're cautiously optimistic, and we'll have to wait and see," she said. "But we don't want to be a Pollyanna about this."

Already, the Education Department has decided that not everything stimulus-related must be transparent. For example, officials have said they will not make public the applications states submit for their shares of the $48.5 billion in state stabilization funding available this year; only the approved applications will be public, after any changes have been made.

That decision comes despite the department's own guidelines governing the stabilization fund, which state: "From the date that a state first submits its application for funding, … the department will make information publicly available regarding a state's implementation of the program."

And although other federal agencies are putting on their Web sites stimulus-related communications between lobbyists and departments—information President Obama required under a March 20 directive—the Education Department had yet to post any such communication as of press time.

Certainly, some of the responsibility for ensuring transparency and accountability will fall to federal auditors. The Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, is required under the stimulus law to issue bimonthly reviews of how selected states and localities are spending the money—and has chosen 16 states to follow over the next several years. The first such GAO report, released April 23, raised red flags about the capacity of states and localities to properly audit stimulus funds and ensure transparency in tough budget times.

The Education Department's office of inspector general got $14 million in stimulus funding to beef up its staff and training, and conduct more audits and inspections. That office plans to conduct reviews at the state and local levels on such issues as data quality, use of funds, and cash management, said Catherine Grant, the department's public-affairs liaison.

But most of the reporting requirements—and thus the burden of transparency—falls to the states, which are charged with reporting quarterly on stimulus spending, starting Oct. 10. Since federal guidelines, so far, apply to the prime recipients of the funding (usually the states), there are few additional reporting requirements just for school districts.

Evolving Process

To that end, every state has set up its version of a recovery Web site. Most states' sites contain only basic stimulus information, such as links to the law, estimates of how much funding a state is supposed to get, and press releases about the benefits of the stimulus law. Many states' sites indicate that more-detailed spending information will be coming.

There are some standouts: Maryland, Virginia, Oregon, and Washington state, for example, provide detailed, county-by-county, stimulus-spending information on their Web sites through colorful, interactive maps.

And Connecticut stands out, providing online details of stimulus-related contacts between lobbyists and executive-branch officials. The records are so detailed that they show that on April 1 and April 2, for instance, a member of the Connecticut Education Association sent an e-mail to the state department of education's legal division urging that stimulus money first be used to save jobs.

The Connecticut site also posts any stimulus project idea submitted to the governor's office, such as the $20,000 walk-in refrigerator wanted by a middle school in Bridgeport, Conn.; the stimulus program has a provision that allows funding for food-service equipment.

For state departments of education, which will likely bear the burden of collecting spending information from local districts, the first priority has been to get stimulus-related information out to school district officials.

"Our primary goal has been early and frequent communication with the field, but we're very cognizant we need to do the transparency piece as well," said David Conarty-Marin, the director of communications for the Maine Department of Education. "All the money that is spent is going to end up on a map on our Web site somehow."

The information will be detailed.

"We don't want to just hear about 'professional development,' " said Jaci Holmes, the federal-state legislative liaison for the Maine department. "We want to get below what's the title to ... what are specific types of programs being funded, and what do they expect as measurable outcomes."

In Arkansas, the education department is working with its data-system vendor, IBM, to expand its reporting system, so that school district officials can electronically submit real-time data on how they're spending their stimulus money and on student-performance outcomes. The next step is to figure out how to make that information publicly available online, said Julie Johnson Thompson, the department's director of communications.

"We're so intent on making sure this money is spent well, and transparently," she said.
In some states, however, many district leaders expect little in the way of extra reporting. Districts are already used to federal reporting requirements for programs such as special education.

And in Illinois, for example, district superintendents aren't expecting that their state's share of the $48.5 billion state fiscal stabilization fund will result in any additional money for school districts because of the state's budget problems. Instead, that money will be used to pay existing staff and existing bills, said David Schuler, the superintendent of the 12,700-student Township High School District 214 in Arlington Heights, Ill.

Even so, districts will have to set up separate accounting codes for stimulus money so they can track how it's spent.

"I wouldn't say it's a nightmare, but it's a logistical challenge," Mr. Schuler said. "We're not really going to see any extra money, so it's really just more paperwork."

The Denver Post
Denver schools advisor going national
4.29.09

Jeremy P. Meyer

Brad Jupp of Denver Public Schools has been tapped to serve as an advisor to U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, according to an announcement Wednesday.

Jupp, DPS' senior policy advisor, will advise Duncan on educator quality and effectiveness. His formal title will be senior education program specialist.

"I'm excited and it's a great opportunity to go work for the president and the secretary of education at this moment in time. So much of what we have been doing in DPS has been predictive of where I think the country is going to go in four years."

Jupp is on loan from DPS, so effectively he continues as a Denver school employee.

"I am going to miss like hell all of the people in DPS," he said.

"Brad is a leader of tremendous courage, intelligence, and creativity, whose greatest strength is his unwavering commitment to the students of Denver," said Denver Superintendent Tom Boasberg in a release.

The district has benefited from his extraordinary work over the past 22 years. We are excited that the experiences and knowledge Brad has gained while at Denver Public Schools will now serve our nation and its schools, teachers and students."

Jupp joined DPS in 1987 as a language arts teacher at Martin Luther King Middle School and from 1989 to 2005 was a leader in Denver's teacher union.

From 1999 to 2005, he led the joint district/union effort to develop and implement Denver's Professional Compensation System for Teachers or ProComp.In 2005, Jupp joined Michael Bennet's team as the Senior Policy Advisor to the Superintendent.

Jupp's wife, Chrisanne Lahue, who has been instrumental in reform efforts at Bruce Randolph School, will accompany him to Washington, D.C., and is currently seeking a teaching position in the DC public schools system.

Morning Edition, NPR
Obama's long education to-do list awaits action
4.30.09

Claudio Sanchez

In his first 100 days as president, Barack Obama has proposed a more expansive federal role in education from cradle to college.

A short list of his numerous education proposals includes: uniform standards for preschool programs; rigorous tests and academic standards for public schools; merit

pay for classroom teachers; a longer school day and school year; and a national strategy to address the high school dropout crisis.

In numerous speeches, the president has called these proposals "the pillars" of his plan to improve education in America.

"The relative decline of American education is untenable for our economy; it's unsustainable for our democracy; it's unacceptable for our children. And we can't afford to let it continue," Obama said in a speech last month.

Obama's education proposals would make any local school board member dizzy, says Jeanne Allen, who heads the Center for Education Reform and is an advocate of charter schools and vouchers. Besides, she says, Obama's agenda is nothing more than a wish list.

"Despite all the great rhetoric about fixing America's schools coming out from the Obama administration in the first 100 days, it is not translating into more quality choices for children," Allen says.

School reform has taken a back seat to fixing an economy still on life support. Critics say the $100 billion in stimulus funds that Obama requested for education come with few strings attached and no incentives for reform.

But the extra money has bought Obama a lot of good will, especially in states facing teacher layoffs and deep budget cuts in education.

In the long term, Obama has vowed to break free from what he calls "the old, tired Washington debate over education — Democrats versus Republicans, federal versus local control, more money versus more reform."

"There's been partisanship and petty bickering, but little recognition that we need to move beyond the worn fights of the 20th century if we're going to succeed in the 21st century," Obama said in March.

This kind of talk, for now, has earned Obama support from conservatives and liberals alike. Republican leaders in Congress, for example, lauded Obama's choice for education secretary, Arne Duncan. Even teachers' unions have agreed to consider what was once unthinkable: linking teacher pay to students' performance, one of Obama's campaign promises.

"I reject a system that rewards failure and protects a person from its consequences — the stakes are too high. We can afford nothing but the best when it comes to our children's teachers and the schools where they teach," Obama said.

Andy Rotherham, a top adviser to the Obama campaign, disagrees with critics who say the president is proposing a bigger federal role in education. He says Obama just wants a more effective role.

"This president clearly did not come to Washington to be an observer," Rotherham says. "He has a big agenda and he has a lot of things he wants to get done. The things he's talking about doing, though, generally do play to the federal government's strength."

Still, most of Obama's education agenda in the first 100 days has been talk, with a couple of exceptions: He has increased funding for Pell Grants for college students and has begun overhauling the federal student loan program.

The president argues that bypassing banks entirely and having the U.S. Education Department issue federal loans directly to college students would save about $48 billion over the next 10 years. The proposal has divided college officials, and banks are gearing up to oppose it.

The loan question is likely to become the first big fight over education policy that the president will face beyond his first 100 days in office.

Article 5 **Top**

The Denver Post
Reforming public education to be relevant to a career
5.01.09

Randy Johnson (Op Ed)

As the late business intellect, Peter Drucker, once noted: "there's nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which shouldn't be done at all."

At this time of state and national economic uncertainty, when the things and the systems that we value most seem to be slipping away, we must recognize that the greatest single loss we are facing - is opportunity.

This economic crisis, like a home at the edge of a burning forest, is providing us the opportunity to reevaluate what is most important to us, and to build anew with new priority. We cannot lose the great opportunity this unprecedented time presents to truly change public education.

We cannot lose the chance to refocus on the practicality and pragmatism of public education as a process for preparing a productive citizenry, rather than as a cultural exercise in warehousing kids with the intent that they will gain the ability to learn if they so desire and become that most nebulous, mission statement type of learner: lifelong learners.

This is the time. Right now we have the ability to effect change with a capital C, on a grand scale, with no hesitancy.

And appropriately enough, President Obama opened the door to true reform even wider when he recently replied to a question about the importance of education as one of the four major points in his overall economic stimulus plan. President Obama stated that education must change for the sake of the future of the American workforce.

This declaration by a seemingly can-do leader who appears to "get it," would seem to settle for our time the age-old philosophical debate of education - is it about content or about process (teaching the tools and skills to learn)?

Public education is apparently about both content and process so long as we effectively prepare individuals to contribute to society.

As a career educator, I like this. Finally, frank discussion about the purpose of education that frees the current system of the baggage we have accumulated.

We're so beyond the agrarian calendar for school years, beyond seat-time in a desk and a classroom as a means by which to base state, district, and school funding, and staffing, and depth of student learning.

We're so beyond homework as a measure of behavioral and academic performance that often trumps demonstrated mastery of competencies, beyond the destructiveness of tenure, beyond systems that work against our ability to truly address the problems we're learning about through the accountability of standardized testing. And yes, keep testing, just give educators the tools and time to effect learning where it's most needed.

We're beyond the system as it currently exists, and most importantly, so are the kids.

Governor Ritter, like the President, is ahead of the national curve with his views on the need to reform the system. The Governor has charged a high-profile council with creating "a seamless education highway from preschool to college" for the clear purpose of economics.

Governor Ritter charges that "as a State we must do a better job of preparing Colorado's young people for the rigors of a 21st century economy."

Both the Governor and the President are sounding clarion calls for reformation of the current system. Clarion calls to return to the purpose of public education - careers.

I urge our state legislators and our state and local school boards to take up these calls and in the days ahead be courageous in your leadership.

Risks are worth taking so long as they are not reckless, and the reality is that few risks are more dangerous than the real cost of maintaining the status quo in public education.

A recent study found that the single greatest factor noted by high school drop-outs that led to their departure from school was - lack of purpose in their classes.

High school dropouts felt there was neither relevance nor real-life purpose for the 1080 hours per year of mandated-for-funding seat-time they were putting into school.

They disengaged. And as they disengaged, they found themselves losing the few electives, career and technical education courses, or extracurricular activities that gave them any sense of purpose at school.

So goes public education, so goes the American workforce - our economy, our standard of living, our perceived quality of life.

President Obama, whether intentionally or not, has refocused systematized education on the end result that every kindergarten teacher asks her students to consider on the first day of school: "what do you want to be when you grow up?"

Public education really is about career education - what or whom do you want to be when you are of the age to begin contributing professionally to our society? A performance-based system is ready to launch.

Our society and our schools are not homogenous entities, but rather complex organizations serving a complex clientele where the single greatest commonality is the driving question about purpose: "what do you want to be when you grow up?"

There's a world of difference between an efficient system of public education and an effective one. Let's not waste the opportunity for real change. The kids are ready.

Randy Johnson is a high school principal at the CEC Middle College of Denver. EDITOR'S NOTE: This is an online-only column and has not been edited.

Article 6 **Top**

AHN
Flint, MI school board lays off 214 teachers, orders 8 schools closed to avoid $20M deficit
5.01.09

Linda Young

Flint, MI (AHN) - School officials have taken drastic steps to avoid a nearly $20 million deficit by laying off 214 teachers and closing eight schools.

Now that the Flint School District Board of Education has approved the 2009-2010 budget with the cuts, school officials will have to work on plans to draw new boundaries and reassign students currently enrolled in schools slated for closure.

Flint Central High School and five elementary schools will close at the end of this school term.

Another two elementary schools will close next year.

Article 7 **Top**

Denver Daily News
Coming to the aid of art in school
5.01.09

Gene Davis

Man spearheads effort to raise funds to keep art program at Edison Elementary School

"Thinking back to elementary school, what do you remember about it?" asks Randy Thomae, a father of two who is leading the fight to save Edison Elementary's art program. "Art, gym, music — those are the things you remember."

Thomae is doing what he can to make sure students at Edison Elementary can have those same memories. Due to a 2-percent across-the-board budget cut for all Denver Public Schools, Edison's program that provides art instruction to 575 kindergarten-fifth graders is on the chopping block.

Need to raise $60,000

Thomae is trying to raise $60,000 by May 28 to ensure the art program stays. Through a series of fundraising events like Friday's scheduled Oakley Local Artists Series — which will feature one-of-a-kind Oakleys that have been fancied up by local artists — and the First Friday event going on at Metro Frame Works — which is hosting an exhibit featuring 30 pieces of art created by Edison students — Thomae has helped raise $17,502 so far.

"I think it's clear to everyone how critical art is to children," Thomae said. "We don't just want to have kids who know how to follow instructions and be mindless automatons. That's not how we're going to succeed in the 21st century."

Helping future customers

Melanie Lunsford of Metro Frame Works, 4400 Tennyson St., said it made sense for her business to help out Edison because the school's students make up a large part of Metro Frame Works' customer base. Along with holding the First Friday event and donating all of the profits from it to the Art For Edison foundation, Metro Frame Works provided 30 art panels, paints and glue so the kids could have material to work with.

"For us to have customers in the future, kids need to grow up knowing what art is about," said Lunsford.

Schools being measured on CSAP scores are a big reason why programs like art are the first to go because of budget cuts, said Thomae. However, just because art isn't as quantifiably measurable as subjects like math and science doesn't mean it's not as important, he added.

"There are lots of kids you might not reach if you don't have an outlet such as art or music where they can express themselves and be good at something," he said. "I think it's pretty clear that many students learn in many different ways."

Inspired

Thomae, a former entrepreneur, took on the stay-at-home dad role when his two kids were born. When he heard about Edison losing its art program, that entrepreneur itch started up and he began looking into how he could help. After working nonstop at the school to try to raise funding and awareness for Edison's art program, Thomae said he was amazed with how bad the situation with overall school funding is.

"There's just not nearly enough money there," he said. "Everyone works so hard just to get paid so little money. It's insulting the way we treat the teachers and the school with the budget. It's practically criminal."

To learn more about saving Edison's art program or to donate directly, visit ArtForEdison.org.

The Providence Journal
Suddenly, kids find physics a magnetic field to study
5.01.09

Julia Steiny

At Portsmouth High School, the number of students signed up to take Advanced Placement science next year nearly doubled since 2006-07. Furthermore, 60 seniors will be taking a fourth year of science over and above the 200 that usually did in the past. They don't have to. The state requires only three years of science.

They want to. These kids are turned on. The Physics First program seems to have done the job.

Jeffrey Schoonover, science department head at Portsmouth, says, "Students used to hear 'physics' and tense up. Only the top kids take it; it's too difficult. Now every freshman takes physics. Kids are inquisitive, and Physics First is very hands-on, so they get excited about the subject. They don't want to be lectured to, which still happens, but less. The classes are more about 'Let's see what happens when the variables change. Let's see what happens when we graph the data. Let's see what happens.' They construct their own knowledge instead of us telling them, which builds a fondness for science classes."

What a relief when education gets incentives right. Kids will work harder and take on tougher challenges when they want to. Not so much when we cajole, force, threaten, shame or browbeat them into it.

Four years ago, the East Bay Collaborative began trying to sell schools on the virtues of Physics First, a resequencing of high school science courses. Established over 100 years ago, traditional academia put biology first. But biology is by far the most complex of all sciences. So 9th-graders — the kids most prone to dropping out — confront biology and fail in depressing numbers. Other students soldier through it, but get so turned off they can't see themselves as science people.

Physics First orders the sciences in their evolutionary sequence: physics, chemistry and then biology. From the atom to the molecule to the cell, kids build their understanding of science with the sequence in which nature built our world.

Back in 2006, Nobel laureate Dr. Leon Lederman, a passionate champion of Physics First, pitched the program at the EBC. He adamantly insisted that the traditional sequence not only gets the story all wrong, but it undercuts all the drama and appeal of science. "Stories are important. You have to tell how science works. How do you make a discovery? It's the messiest process in the world. Who are scientists? What happened to them? Physics First is the harbinger of a real revolution in science that gets right, finally, the storytelling of the three years of high school science. So you start with Newton's law and from there build the cognitive structure."

Whether from desperation or farsightedness, six brave schools decided they would sign on in 2006. That fall, their freshmen were the first to study physics, but without the advanced math or calculus that traditional physics requires. Portsmouth High still offers senior (traditional) and AP physics. But with basic physics already under their belts, seniors are now free to take all sorts of advanced science, including

oceanography, anatomy, urban ecology, as well as AP biology and chemistry. Many are doubling up on science courses. This is great.

Over at East Providence High School, the science staff's time is consumed by the switch from a two-year science requirement to three years. But even there, twice as many juniors, a full second class of 20, are taking AP biology.

Janet Miele, secondary superintendent of science in Woonsocket, reports that failure rates in her high school's science classes have dropped since adopting Physics First. And the kids are doing much better at performing the science tasks for the RI Diploma Project. Woonsocket High hasn't scheduled its courses for next year, but Miele states definitively that "teachers are enjoying the teaching more, and the students are enjoying learning more."

Cranston West's Science Department head, Steve Krous, says that prior to Physics First, the school usually had about 20 kids in AP bio. Fifty have requested it for next year. In fact, requests for elective science courses are so strong, the school can't accommodate 15 sections.

Schools like Times2 — with their enviable 100-percent graduation rate — and private schools like Rocky Hill and Portsmouth Abbey adopted Physics First independent of EBC. Other public schools have since joined the EBC project, so now 30 percent of Rhode Island's students are involved with Physics First.

Mt. Pleasant High School was one of the six early adopters, but the Providence School Department recently withdrew from the project. Supt. Thomas Brady explained that the district is developing a K-12 curriculum that will be standardized across schools. The curriculum developers believed that Physics First is less well suited for preparing Providence students for the state's NECAP tests than the traditional sequence.

Gerald Kowalczy, director of the East Bay Collaborative, and Ronald Kahn, EBC science expert, hotly repudiate that assertion. They pointed to reports and data available on its Web site, especially the Hezel Report.

But over the next few years, kids' performance on the new NECAP science test will determine the efficacy of all schools' science programs.

Except for those at Times2, none of the juniors who took the first such test last spring went through the Physics First program. The results were dismal — 17 percent proficient — even worse than the kids' first efforts at the high-school math test. Still, it's a baseline. If Physics First has strong academic efficacy, the proof will be in the new tests.

In the meantime, however, more kids are taking AP-level science courses, passing science and seeking science challenges. This is huge. This state's workforce development gurus, including the governor, have been dreaming of just this: more kids in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) pipeline. Physics First is doing the job by making learning science so darn interesting.

Good incentives work magic. The field of education needs many more.

Julia Steiny, a former member of the Providence School Board, consults for government agencies and schools; she is co-director of Information Works!, Rhode

Island's school-accountability project. She can be reached at juliasteiny@gmail.com, or c/o EdWatch, The Providence Journal, 75 Fountain St., Providence, RI 02902.

Beatrice Daily Sun (NE)
The 21st Century student: At ease with technology
5.01.09

Chris Dunker

According to the Nebraska State Activities Association, Omaha Westside High School is currently the eighth largest school in Nebraska with just under 1,500 students enrolled.

Lewiston High School, on the other hand, ranks 228th in enrollment with 60 high school students.

But when it comes to being ahead of the curve in educational practices, Lewiston is stride-for-stride with Westside.

The small, rural school in Southeast Nebraska is the newest member of a growing community promoting students to take a greater responsibility for their own education by granting each student a personal laptop computer.

Social studies teacher Rich Gilson said the 1:1 student to computer program is a great way to integrate technology into the classroom and education.

"We're like any other school," Gilson said. "Where I teach, social studies, which is notorious for not being the most exciting subject area, but kids are excited about coming to my classroom because of what I'm trying to do with technology.

"That's a hook I'm going to take and use as much as I can," he added.

The 1:1 program is a national initiative by Apple to prepare students across the country to become citizens in a global environment. Superintendent Dr. Bruce McCoy said the program was something the district was interested in and feasible using a REAP Grant.

The Rural Education Achievement Program Grant provides Lewiston Public Schools with nearly $25,000 every year to use for bettering education. McCoy and teachers from the school presented the idea to the school board, who was receptive to the initiative.

"The board is really interested in doing something that would be a benefit to the students of the future and make them more excited about their learning," McCoy said. "So, we said 'let's go for it'."

Currently, Lewiston has 40 student laptops and two mobile labs -- one for the high school and one for the elementary school -- for a total of approximately 80 computers. School officials are hoping to get around 125 total computers for the school.

Each student having a computer to use in school and at home will allow students to achieve at a high level with greater student responsibility.

"I think it gives them a little more sense of responsibility for how they are gonna learn and what they are gonna learn because they have the tools that everyone else in the class has," said computer teacher Natalie Sisco.

Gilson and Sisco said along with using the computers in class, if a student misses school they will be able to download the class notes or presentation podcasts from the Internet. Podcasts are a growing trend in education, similar to a television recording that can be played back via the computer.

The computers will also afford Lewiston teachers greater range for education opportunities in class Gilson said.

"Before you could show a video in your class and the kids were excited because they didn't have to take notes," Gilson said. "Now, we can have them make their own videos, their own podcasts."

As the social studies teacher demonstrated the different online applications that students had been using in class, two students stopped in the class to ask if they could borrow computers from the lab.

The possibilities with the 1:1 program are endless, Gilson said.

"Here, they can collaborate with students all over the country or all over the world. It's really opening up their eyes to more than Southeast Nebraska."

Article 10 **Top**

Pioneer Press
St. Paul district proposes closing 3 elementary programs, changing school choice system
5.01.09

Doug Belden

3 elementary programs would close, school choice would change

Three elementary school programs would be shut down and the district would move to a regional model for school choice under draft recommendations released Thursday night by St. Paul Public Schools.

The recommendations, posted on the district's Web site at spps.org, are being prepared for a presentation Tuesday to the school board. They would take effect in the fall of 2010.

The elementary schools to be closed are not named, but they will be Tuesday, said Christine Wroblewski, the district's chief community relations officer.

For two of the schools, both the program and the building itself will be closed. For the third, the program will be dissolved, but the building will be used for another purpose, similar to what was done at the old Parkway Elementary, according to the recommendations.

The district estimates the three closures — plus moving Humboldt Junior High into the adjacent high school, which is scheduled for this coming fall — will save close to

$2.5 million, not counting transportation savings or the cost of relocation and repurposing.

Administrators have said that school closing decisions will take into account academic performance, enrollment and facility condition.

St. Paul Public Schools is facing a budget shortfall of at least $25 million for the 2009-10 school year, and the district has been preparing for "large-scale system changes" in response to expectations of declining enrollment and growing budget shortfalls in years to come. The district's infrastructure was designed to house more than 45,000 students, but current enrollment is about 39,000 and dropping.

St. Paul's school-choice system — in which students can get a free bus ride to all secondary and most elementary schools throughout the city — is popular with parents but often criticized for being overly complex and expensive.

The recommendations would reduce the number of application preferences and divide the city into three regions, with students being able to attend any school in their region. Seven schools would remain as citywide options. The three-region plan is estimated to save $2.2 million in transportation costs.

Administrators estimate nearly 20 percent of the student body would potentially change schools in the first year of a three-region system.

The recommendations also call for creating and implementing a "performance management system for all employees to include incentives and modifications to our current contract, tenure, and seniority processes." Labor agreements would have to be modified through negotiation, and the goal would be to get the most effective teachers with the students most in need, Wroblewski said.

The plan envisions getting a Q Comp plan approved for St. Paul. Q Comp is the state program aimed at shifting teacher salary calculations from experience and education to performance measures.

Article 11 **Top**

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
NAACP to advise parents on improving schools
5.01.09

D. Aileen Dodd

The NAACP will host a free conference on public education today to encourage parents to demand improvements from their schools so kids will be better equipped for college.

Mediocre benchmarks on state standardized tests, slow gains on the achievement gap and ambiguous student discipline policies that create racial disparities threaten the future success of Georgia’s students, said Ed DuBose, state NAACP president.

The Georgia State Conference NAACP Education Action Alert will show parents how to advocate for their kids. The event will run from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Morehouse College’s Kilgore Center in Atlanta.

"Without a good education you are locked out of the American dream," DuBose said. "Parents need to understand their rights and what it takes to get their students through high school and into college and how to fight the system when all of this does not work the way it should."

The second annual conference will share information from two national studies examining Georgia's public schools. One study, "Education Watch" conducted by The Education Trust of Washington, D.C., shows that minority students on average in Georgia continue to lag behind whites on state standardized tests, are less likely to pass Advanced Placement exams and are less likely to graduate in four years. The probe, which analyzes test data from 2007, also shows the achievement gap widens on a national assessment and that proficiency rates dropped for both white and minorities when scores in some areas were compared to peers nationwide.

"States were allowed to set their own standards under No Child Left Behind and states have set wildly different standards," said Anna Habash, a spokeswoman with Education Trust. "In eighth grade math, Georgia [says] that 81 percent of students met standards, the national assessment [National Assessment of Educational Progress] says only 25 percent of students are meeting the standard … "

Officials from the Georgia Department of Education will discuss student progress. Guest speakers also include Victor Goode, national NAACP staff attorney, Georgia PTA leaders and former district attorney J. Tom Morgan, who will share lessons from his book "Ignorance Is No Defense: A Teenager's Guide to Georgia Law." Morgan's 12:15 p.m. talk will help parents and kids understand their rights when discipline incidents at school are investigated as crimes.

At 3:45 p.m., a workshop on navigating the student discipline system will feature advice from the new national publication "When My Child Is Disciplined at School," adapted for state use by Georgia Appleseed, a legal advocacy group.

"We want NAACP branches to approach their school boards about their student Codes of Conduct and see if it is time to revise them," said Jennifer Falk, state NAACP education chair. "Some are so loosely written that a parent could never predict what was going to send their child to an alternative school … or court. There is a time and a place for kids in court and it probably isn't for disorderly conduct. There are things that could be handled within the walls of a school so a child does not miss out on their education."

Article 12 **Top**

The Colorado Statesman
'No child left inside' promotes outdoor education
5.01.09

Kathrine Warren

No child was to be left behind under the previous administration's education policy.

Now that Democrats control the presidency and both chambers of Congress, focus is shifting back to environmentalism, and the push is on to see that no child is left inside, either.

As a part of Earth Day celebrations nationwide on April 22, the No Child Left Inside Act was introduced simultaneously in the House and Senate. Its all-but-inevitable

passage would mark the first time in more than 25 years that Congress has passed environmental education legislation.

Chief sponsors Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI) and U.S. Rep. John Sarbanes (D-MD) gleaned 10 co-sponsors in the Senate and 38 co-sponsors in the House, including 2nd Congressional District Rep. Jared Polis, D-Boulder.

The bill calls for $100 million per year for the next five years to come from the Department of Education to fund environmental education supporting professional development for teachers and outdoor learning activities through schools and environmental education centers.

In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act, which defined the core skills all students in the United States must master at each grade level, led educators to focus exclusively on creating curricula to meet reading, math and science standards.

The No Child Left Inside Act was designed to encourage teachers to incorporate environmental education into their curricula in order to reconnect children with the world of nature.

In a statement this week, Polis explained why he supports the legislation.

"Since coming to Congress, the health of our children and of our environment have been two of my highest priorities," he said. "This bill harmoniously unites both efforts to everyone's benefit: Our children benefit by being more physically fit, and our nation benefits from new generations of Americans with greater appreciation of our planet and the great outdoors."

The No Child Left Inside Act was previously introduced in Congress last fall, but made it only through the House before the 2008 session ended. It therefore had to be reintroduced to the new Congress.

States that want to gain access to part of the $100 million that would become available if the legislation passes will be required to develop environmental literacy plans.

According to Don Baugh, director of the No Child Left Inside Coalition and vice president for education at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, 25 states already are working to develop state environmental literacy plans in anticipation of the bill's passage.

The No Child Left Inside Coalition, created in 2006 with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation as its fiscal agent, represents more than 1,500 separate organizations working to encourage children to experience nature and learn about the environment.

Baugh hopes the significant bipartisan support the bill already has received in Congress presages its passage, and that states can soon begin to develop their plans for environmental education.

Maryland, home of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and of Sarbanes, the congressman who introduced the bill last week, is one of the few states that has developed a complete draft plan in anticipation of the legislation.

Officials in Colorado plan to start drafting the state Environmental Literacy Plan this summer.

Lt. Gov. Barbara O'Brien will begin work on Colorado's literacy plan as she tours the state holding community forums designed to bring together all parties interested in discussing environmental education. The forums also will explore the state's current successes and challenges in getting children involved in the natural world.

O'Brien and her staff also are working to create a Colorado Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights — a list of outdoor activities all Colorado children have the right to experience before age 18.

Baugh commended Colorado for the work it has already begun to do in anticipation of the No Child Left Inside Act.

"I think Colorado is uniquely poised to make a major statement," he said. "You've got some of the greatest natural resources, and it appears that the stars are starting to line up with good leadership."

The Colorado Alliance for Environmental Educators has been working this past year to solicit support from the state's congressional delegates and is also working with O'Brien's office to develop the literacy plan.

Ali Gouhstone Sweeny, the director of the alliance, says it's important for Colorado to develop an Environmental Literacy Plan with or without federal prodding.

"It's important that environmental education is approached with a strategy that would become a comprehensive framework for educators," she said.

Article 13 **Top**

The Notebook (Philadelphia Public School Blog)
Arne Duncan tells Education Writers Association: NCLB has to go (the name, not the law)
5.01.09

Dale Mezzacappa

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan addressed the annual convention of the Education Writers Association in Washington, DC Thursday night, and he said that the name "No Child Left Behind" has to go.

"The name 'No Child Left Behind' is toxic," he said.

Duncan doesn't want to scrap NCLB by a long shot, but he wants to see some changes, especially in how schools are evaluated. He called himself a big fan of value-added methods of judging school progress -- in other words, looking at growth in test scores -- rather than relying on a basic proficiency rate.

On testing, Duncan said he realizes the limits of standardized tests, but doesn't want to get rid of them. "Test scores don't tell us everything, but they tell us some things. We must use what we have until we come up with something better."

One other indicator he wants to add to NCLB -- or whatever it will be called -- is a measure for high schools of how well they keep ninth graders on track.

Duncan said that he wants all states to have data systems that can tie student progress to individual teachers.

He gave a strong endorsement to alternative pathways back to high school, saying that "the hardest work in the country" is getting 15- to 17-year-olds who have "lost their way" back in school, or back on track in school.

As for the stimulus money, which he said represents an "opportunity that won't come again," he said that to get a share of the funding set aside for the "Race to the Top," states and districts will have to show that they have used their other money creatively. "The first question on the application will be, 'how did you use your stimulus money,'" he said. Request-for-proposals for that $5 billion pot of money will go out within a few months to states, which will get the bulk of the money, and later to districts and nonprofits, which will compete for $650 million of the total.

Duncan made a strong plea for schools and school districts to be as open as possible. EWA's public editor, Linda Perlstein, said that many education writers are "up against a pervasive culture of fear in the education world and the world of schools. Teachers and principals are afraid to be honest with us." Often, that tone is set from the top leadership of a district.

"We're trying to do everything we can to create unparalleled transparency," Duncan said. "We must dismantle the barriers to straightforward discussion. The lack of willingness to open up actually impedes progress."

OK, teachers and principals and other district administrators, what do you think about that? Do you feel that you are encouraged to speak freely to the press and public in Philadelphia? We would love your reaction.

Article 14 **Top**

Congressional Quarterly
Putting students on the same high-performance page
5.02.09

Lydia Gensheimer

What happens when you have a law that’s supposed to improve performance among the nation’s school children but instead it creates confusion, lowers expectations and can result in a “dummying down” of state standards?

That’s what a panel of educational experts is trying to address with a plan to incorporate common academic standards. They are urging Congress to support a state-led initiative to develop more-uniform, clear and integrated standards that reflect both the global marketplace and Americans’ mobility within the country.

Under the 2002 No Child Left Behind law (PL 107-110), states set their own standards — resulting in what Education Secretary Arne Duncan calls a “dummying down” of state standards in order to meet benchmarks set by the law.

Those who advocate for common standards contend that a system of variable expectations — ones that are often too low — leads American students to underperform when compared with their peers in Finland or China. President Obama called for common standards in a March 10 speech, and Duncan has said he would

use a portion of a $5 billion "Race to the Top" fund under his discretion to reward states working toward that goal.

The panel — which included Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers; former North Carolina Gov. James B. Hunt Jr.; and Dave Levin, founder of the KIPP charter schools — testified April 29 at a House Education and Labor Committee hearing.

Committee Chairman George Miller, D-Calif., said at the hearing that developing internationally benchmarked standards would help fulfill the goals of the No Child law.

"The goal ... is to make sure every child receives an excellent public education based on high standards," he said. "While some states have done a good job insisting on higher standards, others have set the bar far too low."

Weingarten said she recently wrote to Duncan seeking financial support for a system focusing on fewer, clearer and better-coordinated standards crafted with input from teachers.

"All too often, teachers end up making it up as you go along because of a lack of common standards," she said.

After the standards are developed, Hunt told the panel, Congress should financially support the design of assessments tied to those standards that "go beyond" multiple-choice and paper tests.

Working on Voluntary Standards

Earlier this month, the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers led a discussion with representatives from 41 states to begin developing voluntary common standards.

The ranking member on the Education and Labor panel, California Republican Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, praised the states' efforts. "I think we are right to begin by examining an issue where leadership need not — and currently does not — come from the federal government," he said.

Ken James, commissioner of Arkansas' Department of Education, said the effort must be seen as state-led in order to be successful. "This cannot be perceived as federally imposed," he said.

But Mark Souder, R-Ind., said he opposed the efforts and said a "straitjacket of standards," no matter who led the effort to develop them, would lead to a "national curriculum."

Each panelist insisted that the current state-led effort was not an attempt to impose federal standards. But Hunt said that if state efforts to develop standards failed, a "government effort" would be needed.

In a letter sent to Miller on April 28, the National School Board Association called on Congress to provide funding to states to assist them in developing and implementing standards. The letter also asked Miller to oppose efforts to impose mandatory national content standards.

Miller said the state-led effort was a gamble that he hoped would pay off. "We are placing a very big bet on the states," he said. "My sense is we're placing the bet in the right place."

Article 15 **Top**

The Providence Journal
State commissioner of higher education moving to South Dakota
5.02.09

Linda Borg

PROVIDENCE — Jack Warner, the state commissioner of higher education since 2002, is leaving to take a similar job in South Dakota, where he will be the executive director of the state's board of regents.

On Friday, Warner said that the South Dakota offer was too good to pass up, adding that the regents recruited him. Warner will be paid $323,000 a year, more than double his base salary of $135,000 in Rhode Island. But he said that the salary alone wasn't enough to entice him to leave the Ocean State.

"I wouldn't go to a system unless the conditions were right," Warner said in a phone call from South Dakota on Friday. "I'm used to working with an excellent board and a supportive governor in Rhode Island. Those conditions also exist in South Dakota."

On Friday, the South Dakota Board of Regents unanimously voted to select Warner, 63, as its executive director, effective July 8. He replaces Tad Perry, who is retiring after 15 years at the helm of South Dakota's university system and who is currently the nation's longest-serving higher-education director.

Perry, in a published report, called Warner "the best state higher-education officer in the country."

Although South Dakota's higher-education system has six universities and two special schools, one for the deaf and one for the visually impaired, it is similar in size to Rhode Island's system, which serves approximately 40,000 students.

Warner said the challenges facing South Dakota's higher-education institutions are not that different from those facing public colleges in Rhode Island: keeping the system affordable, making sure that enrollments continue to grow and increasing the number of college graduates. South Dakota has been expanding research at its six universities and Warner promised to press for more private and federal grants to continue that effort.

Although Warner thanked the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education for its support, he acknowledged his frustration with the level of state support for running the three public institutions — the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College and the Community College of Rhode Island.

"We have not had very good funding for operations," he said. "That was a challenge, but most states are now facing that challenge."

A decade ago, the state contributed 53 percent of the state colleges' operating budgets; that percentage dropped to 30 percent this year and could drop even lower next year.

With Warner's imminent departure, the face of education in Rhode Island will surely change. Peter McWalters, the state's commissioner of public education for the past 17 years, is stepping down next month, and so is URI's long-standing president, Robert L. Carothers. Carothers steps down June 30.

"Commissioner Warner has left an indelible mark on our higher education system and will certainly be missed," Governor Carcieri said Friday. "Through his innovative and collaborative efforts with workforce development, our students are better prepared to enter the work force."

Board of Governors Chairman Frank Caprio called Warner an "extraordinary resource" and said he was a tremendous asset to higher education in Rhode Island.

Warner developed a joint agreement that makes it easier for community college graduates to transfer to URI and RIC; consolidated 39 degree programs that had low enrollments and created dual enrollment programs that allow high school students to earn college credit.

Warner also built a data warehouse that tracks student progress at each of the state's three public colleges and from one institution to another. Based on that data, Rhode Island high schools now receive an annual report that shows how each student performed during his or her freshman year in college.

Warner, who joked that geography will be a challenge for him, is moving from one of the most densely populated states in the country to one of the least. South Dakota has about 800,000 residents, less than Rhode Island.

Before becoming the commissioner of higher education in Rhode Island, Warner was vice chancellor of the Massachusetts higher-education system for five years. He and his wife, Celeste, have three grown children.

Article 16 **Top**

The San Francisco Examiner
Students master language skills
5.02.09

Andrea Koskey

Two of the three Rs are improving — and the other doesn't have to do with the test.

More foreign-language speaking students in San Francisco schools are improving their English skills, according to data recently released by the state Department of Education.

Roughly 71 percent of the 13,523 San Francisco Unified District students taking the California English Language Development Test scored at the intermediate level or above in English proficiency.

The test examines the ability of students to read, write, speak and listen to English.

The increased scores mean students are inching closer to proficiency and placement in a regular English class, according to J.T. Lawrence, director of standards and assessment for the state.

Though this year's proficiency increased one percentage point over the 2007-08 school year, nearly 300 additional students took the test last fall in San Francisco, according to the results.

"We're seeing slow and steady gains," Lawrence said. "Fewer students are coming to the table with low proficiency."

San Francisco Unified School District officials said they hope to obtain 100 percent proficiency for all students.

The test scores for district students are slightly below that of the state average.

Statewide, 76.5 percent of the 1.3 million California students who took the language test are at or above an intermediate understanding of English.

California has the greatest number of students whose primary language is not English, according to state officials. More than 100 languages are spoken by the state's English learners. The majority of the students, 85 percent, who are not proficient in English, speak Spanish.

According to Lawrence, the English learning test is meant to be used as a tool for schools and districts in order to place non-English speaking students in the right classes to receive the appropriate help in gaining a better understanding of the language.

Gaining ground

The percentage of students who are proficient in speaking, writing and reading English is improving.

2008-09 test results

Proficiency level	**Number of students**	**Percentage**
Advanced	1,325	10
Early Advanced	3,850	28
Intermediate	4,446	33
Early Intermediate	2,147	16
Beginner	1,755	13
Total	**13,523**	**100**

2007-08 test results

Proficiency level	**Number of students**	**Percentage**
Advanced	1,230	9
Early advanced	3,657	27
Intermediate	4,576	34
Early intermediate	2,244	17

Beginning	1,626	12
Total	13,333	100

Source: California Department of Education

Article 17 **Top**

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
Easy grades, failing grads
5.03.09

Heather Vogell

More start college in remedial classrooms. School teachers say they're pressured to award passing marks.

Some metro Atlanta public high schools that don't grade rigorously produce more graduates lacking the basic English and math skills needed for college, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution has found.

Many graduates of those high schools are sent to remedial classes as college freshmen to learn what high school didn't teach them. As many as a third or more college-bound graduates from some high schools need the extra instruction.

Problems with classroom grading came to light in a February state study that showed some high schools regularly awarded good marks to students who failed state tests in the same subject.

The AJC found that metro high schools where classroom grading appeared lax or out-of-step with state standards tended to have higher rates of students who took remedial classes. And at dozens of high schools, most graduates who received the B average needed for a state HOPE scholarship lost it in college after a few years.

Unprepared high-school graduates are a growing problem for the public university system, where remedial students are concentrated in two-year colleges.

Statewide, the remedial rate has climbed to 1 in 4 first-year students after dropping in the 1990s, said Chancellor Erroll Davis Jr. of the University System of Georgia. The cost to the system: $25 million a year.

Students such as Brandon Curry, 20, a graduate of Redan High in DeKalb County, said they were surprised to learn decent high school grades don't always translate into college success.

"English was my strongest subject," he said after a remedial reading class earlier this spring at Georgia Perimeter College in Clarkston. "But when I came to college, I was like, 'Whoa.'

"I'm on this level," he said, motioning to about knee-level. "And I'm supposed to be up here," he said, raising his hand above his chest.

In some cases, students wrestle with basic reading comprehension, said Karen Duncan, an assistant reading professor at Perimeter.

"It's abysmal," she said. "We've got students in there who may be on the fifth- or sixth-grade level."

The newspaper analyzed the most recent data available on graduates from 12 metro Atlanta districts who attended public colleges. The AJC compared the percentage of schools' college-bound graduates who took remedial classes, the number that lost their HOPE scholarship, and the state study suggesting some high schools could be inflating classroom grades.

The data showed:

- For 30 of 103 metro Atlanta high schools, more than 1 in 3 of their graduates took remedial classes as freshmen in the 2007-2008 school year. At seven of those schools, at least half did.

- At 44 metro high schools, half or more HOPE scholars who began college in 2002 and remained enrolled lost the grant within four years. At a dozen of those schools, 70 percent or more did.

- In one district, Atlanta, 86 percent of the more than 200 students who entered the state's two-year colleges in the fall of 2007 needed remedial classes. Within that group, 29 of 37 HOPE scholars needed remedial help.

However clear the problem may be to college professors, it is not one most educators in local school systems are eager to talk about. And the question of who is responsible leads to more than one answer. The classroom teacher, the principal and the school district are all under pressure to tout student successes, not failures. State education and university system officials have a role, too, yet it can be far removed from individual classrooms.

State School Superintendent Kathy Cox said Georgia is making policy changes that demand more from high school students. But she said it could be several more years before the rate of students who need remedial help falls. "For too long, we've kowtowed to the low expectations," she said.

An overhaul of high school curriculum, more accountability, and changes in graduation requirements and high school course options should improve college performance, Cox said. She declined to specify when the state would be able to assess whether its reforms, which have been phased in since 2005, had succeeded.

Spokesmen for the Atlanta and DeKalb school districts issued written statements in response to questions from the newspaper about their remedial rates, which were the highest in metro Atlanta.

In an e-mail, DeKalb spokesman Dale Davis said the district encourages all schools to teach and grade rigorously. Teachers are supposed to teach the state standards and use benchmark tests to check whether students are learning what they should.

Atlanta spokesman Joe Manguno said the district believes changes it has made, such as creating smaller schools within schools and improving instruction, will over time help students perform better.

A spokesman for Clayton County, whose rate was also high, did not respond to multiple requests for comment. Principals at 10 high schools with high remedial rates either did not return a phone call or referred questions to a district spokesman.

Ultimately, high schools are responsible for monitoring how their graduates do after leaving, said Patrick Callan, president of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education in California. But to prepare students well, he said, schools need guidance from colleges and solid teacher training programs.

"It's a little bit of everybody that's responsible," he said. "It doesn't mean no one's accountable, but it means you have to break it up into pieces and figure out where the system is breaking down."

Educators in other states are also struggling to raise high school standards to meet college and career expectations in a world where the labor market demands increasing academic skills from job-seekers.

For Georgia, where SAT and ACT scores as well as college graduation rates trail the nation's, the problem is pressing. Chancellor Davis said the university system's success hinges on how well K-12 schools prepare their students.

Classroom grading grew controversial after the Governor's Office of Student Achievement released its study this year showing a gap between high school students' class grades and their scores on state standardized tests —- known as End of Course Tests —- in the same subject.

To some, the study suggested grade inflation remains a problem in certain high schools and school districts. Even with new reforms arriving each fall, some high school teachers complain about a culture they say discourages rigorous teaching and grading.

Several current teachers said they could not agree to have their name published along with their concerns because they feared for their jobs. Their complaints echoed recent blog posts and e-mails from other teachers.

They said that some schools bar teachers from giving "zeroes" —- or even failing grades —- for work never submitted, let students retake classes without penalty, and punish teachers who fail too many students. They said administrators pressure them to pass students who put little or no effort into learning because of fears that the students will drop out.

Dropouts pull down a school's graduation rate, one of the measures used to determine if it has met federal standards set out in the No Child Left Behind Act.

Ann Robinson, a former high school science teacher in Cobb and Paulding counties, said friends of hers who still teach told her they believe the federal law has forced them to lower standards.

"They don't like passing the kids who aren't doing the work," she said. "But the administrators will say, 'If you don't do this, you'll be out of a job. We'll find someone who will.'"

Now an adjunct science professor for the University of West Georgia, Robinson said some of her students didn't pick up adequate study skills or knowledge in high school. They memorized enough math to graduate, for example, but can't solve simple algebra problems.

"Speed is distance divided by time," she said. "I say, 'Find the distance,' and they say, 'You can't do that.'"

Some students at Georgia Perimeter said high school teachers pushed them along despite gaps.

Curry, the graduate of Redan High in DeKalb, said that when he struggled in high school math, one teacher offered him an easy opportunity for extra credit.

"My teacher was like, 'I know you want to graduate, so if you just do this one project, you can pass,'" he said. He did. He ended up in remedial math, too.

Jenai Felder, 19, who is also taking remedial reading, said most of her teachers at the public Mount Zion High in Clayton County didn't require much to earn passing grades. One teacher even gave the class the answers to test questions regularly, she said.

The exception was an economics teacher who was tough but fair, she said.

"We really appreciated we were actually learning stuff," Felder said. "The grades weren't just given to us."

Redan High's principal referred questions to spokesman Davis, whose statement of response did not mention Redan.

Calls to present and past Mount Zion principals were not returned.

Cox, who taught social studies in Fayette County schools, said she discovered in the classroom that going easy on students doesn't help them succeed. But she also said teachers at times misunderstand what administrators are trying to accomplish when they question harsh grading.

"Teachers are misinterpreting a lot of what these principals are trying to do," she said. "These principals are trying to get teachers to grade based on the standards."

If a child goofs off for part of the semester, then shapes up later, for instance, what's most important is that he or she can do work up to state standards, Cox said.

The AJC's analysis suggested a possible link between less rigorous grading and high rates of graduates in remedial classes for both metro schools and districts. The Atlanta, DeKalb and Clayton systems, for instance, were high in both remedial rates and measures showing students' classroom grades were much better than their scores on the related End of Course Tests. Those standardized tests, given in eight subjects, measure how well students know the state curriculum.

The same connection appeared for some high schools.

At Cedar Grove High in DeKalb, for instance, 60 percent of public college-bound graduates needed remedial help as freshmen in 2007. When the high school's students had taken economics, 2 percent failed the course. But 57 percent failed the economics End of Course Test.

At Washington High in Atlanta, 52 percent of graduates needed remedial help in college. Only 0.4 percent of students failed economics, but 63 percent failed the economics state test.

A call to Cedar Grove's principal was not returned. Washington's principal said he could not speak without permission from the district spokesman, whose statement did not mention the school.

While differences existed among schools within districts, Gwinnett and Cobb schools appeared to have more rigorous classroom grading and lower rates of graduates with remedial needs.

At one school with a low remediation rate of 15 percent, East Paulding High, Assistant Principal Misty Cooksey said the school has switched from traditional grading to the standards-based grading Cox cited, which gives students more chances to catch up during the school year.

Some teachers are still struggling with the change, she said, but most have embraced it. Ultimately, the school lets teachers have the final say on whether students pass, she said.

"We try very hard not to put any pressure on our teachers," Cooksey said.

In recent years, high-profile reforms such as rewriting high school diploma and curriculum standards aimed to raise Georgia students' capacity for college or career work. Despite some schools' struggles, the state is a leader in developing a reform agenda to improve college readiness, said David Spence, president of the Southern Regional Education Board.

"Moving a big state like this is a tremendous challenge," he said.

The goal is to eventually have graduation requirements stringent enough that all students who earn a high school diploma have the right skills to continue their education if they choose to, said university system Vice Chancellor Lynne Weisenbach.

"Simply graduating from high school for most students isn't going to be sufficient for careers in a 21st century economy that really provide meaningful employment," she said.

Yet while policy leaders in higher education and the public school system are working together, teachers at both levels communicate far less often, said spokesman Tim Callahan, whose 75,000-member Professional Association of Georgia Educators is the state's largest teacher's group. As a result, changes that need to happen in the classroom sometimes don't, he said.

"This isn't rocket science," he said. "What's keeping us from getting together?"

Parent Mark Eldred of Coweta County said the schools' impulse to move children along who can't do the work affected his son early. Now a seventh grader, he failed the math standardized Criterion Referenced Competency Test in fifth grade.

"We said, 'Listen, let's hold him back,'" Eldred said. "They were like, 'No, that's not possible, he's a good kid.'"

Eldred was frustrated to see his son never bring home report card grades lower than a 70, despite receiving "F's" and 30s on homework assignments. "He didn't get the grade he earned, and I don't think that's right," he said.

The 13-year-old is still having difficulty. And high school is just around the corner.

"If my kid's failing, I need to know he's failing," Eldred said. "At the end of the day, it's going to make things worse, not better."

Article 18 **Top**

Pioneer Press
Critics of Meria Carstarphen speak, hoping debate influences who succeeds her at helm of St. Paul schools
5.02.09

Doug Belden

Carstarphen's critics speak out, hope debate influences next choice

More than half the top administrators in place when Meria Carstarphen became St. Paul Public Schools superintendent in 2006 have left.

At the same time, the senior administration has expanded, fueling a 20 percent jump in salary costs for that group.

To Carstarphen's critics, these numbers reflect a bullying management style that has driven away valuable staff, combined with costly administrative reorganizations of questionable value.

Carstarphen declined to comment for this story, but her defenders say the turnover is typical for an organization undergoing change and that the restructurings were needed to meet rising demands. They say grumbling about a superintendent — especially one on her way out the door — is to be expected.

In her three years in St. Paul, Carstarphen, 39, has gotten high marks from the school board and been embraced by many community leaders.

But as she prepares to take over the Austin, Texas, schools, some who worked for her are voicing an alternative view of her leadership that they hope school board members will bear in mind as they select a new superintendent.

GAUGING OPINION

"Meria's confrontational style has rendered the administrative work environment toxic," said Patrick Quinn, the district's former executive director of facility and plant planning, in a recent letter to the Pioneer Press.

Quinn, a 19-year district employee, had always enjoyed his work, he wrote, but when he returned from a medical leave a year into Carstarphen's tenure, the atmosphere at district headquarters had changed.

"People simply didn't want to come to work. ... There was an ongoing 'blame game' that was more like open warfare in the elevators," he wrote. "She undermined her own efforts by an inability to 'manage nicely' and draw out people's best efforts without resorting to intimidation."

Quinn's job was cut by Carstarphen, but he says his criticisms shouldn't be dismissed as sour grapes.

"This has been a topic of conversation" in district circles for some time, he said. "She's the only one that's had the microphone. ... I think there's more to be said."

Mary Chorewycz says she used to tell people she wished Carstarphen had been a principal before becoming a superintendent, so she would have had the experience of not just coming up with a plan but also of working with people to get it enacted.

"If you verbally abuse those that must carry through that plan, it really diminishes the amount that is accomplished," said Chorewycz, former executive director of research and development, who left in 2007.

One of the last straws for her, she said, was when Carstarphen came in one morning and harangued the group of nearly 20 senior leaders for about 40 minutes, telling them in a raised voice how incompetent they were.

Chorewycz, an administrator in St. Paul schools for more than 30 years, said no superintendent in her experience "has prevented or inhibited so much through disrespect of people and ideas."

Connie Feil, former director of technology, retired in November after 10 years with the district. She said she might have stayed through this school year if the district had a different leader.

"I do think there needs to be some healing," she said. "I think it will be important to find a superintendent who maybe can really lead from the heart."

Three former and current staff members — with jobs ranging from clerical to senior management — backed up the assessments of Carstarphen by Quinn, Chorewycz and Feil, but they requested anonymity.

Others who have worked closely with Carstarphen offered a different view.

Deb Henton, who was Carstarphen's chief of staff before leaving in 2007 to become superintendent in North Branch, said the complaints illustrate a basic truth: "People are hard on their leaders."

Carstarphen came in facing "some really big challenges," Henton said, including a levy referendum campaign, the achievement gap and new federal accountability requirements.

She worked hard, involved people in decisions and expected a lot from her key staff members, Henton said. And she did translate plans into action.

Bill Larson, a retired district administrator who filled in under Carstarphen as executive director of operations, remains a huge fan.

"I think it's a disaster that she's leaving," he said.

He said of her approach: "She's treated everything like it's a crisis. When you look at test scores and the achievement gap, it is a crisis."

Quinn credits Carstarphen with moving the district ahead in terms of classroom practices, but it doesn't mean she was a success, he said.

Larson, who served as interim superintendent in the late 1990s, counters that Carstarphen shouldn't be blamed for clashing with staff while accomplishing what she did.

"You can't make an omelet without breaking a few eggs," he said.

MEASURING IMPACT

Because Carstarphen was here only three years, the full impact of her work isn't clear.

Overall, reading proficiency didn't change much in her time. Math proficiency went up, as it did around the state. Enrollment dropped about 5 percent and is expected to continue to decline.

What she's often credited with is establishing data-based criteria to guide staffing and school-change decisions brought about by declining enrollment and rising federal accountability requirements.

In the course of doing so, she has had several administrators leave and has increased the size and cost of the administrative ranks.

Of the 23 members of the "superintendency" — the top district administrators, including chiefs, deputy chiefs, executive directors and directors — in place when Carstarphen arrived in 2006, 14 have retired or resigned, according to district data.

More than 50 percent turnover in three years is "definitely on the high side" said Dan Domenech, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators, the national professional organization for superintendents.

But Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools — a coalition of urban districts — said for a big-city district with a new leader undertaking dramatic change, "those numbers are not unusual by any stretch of the imagination."

Departures from the rungs below top administration appear to have increased under Carstarphen as well.

Turnover among the group of 220 or so administrators districtwide — including the top people plus supervisors, managers, school principals and assistant principals — was running about 20 people per year in the two years before Carstarphen arrived.

Her first year, 37 administrators left. The next year, 30 more were gone.

Meanwhile, salary costs for the superintendency increased from $2,592,917 in May 2006 to $3,106,525 in March 2009, according to district records.

Part of that increase is cost-of-living adjustments and the pay differential between the interim superintendent in 2006 and Carstarphen.

But some is due to the fact that Carstarphen added two positions to the superintendency — despite her assurances that her reorganizations were not expanding central administration — and enhanced some titles.

She has increased administrative staffing at all levels, to 243 from 223, based on counts from the annual "Administrators' Academy."

She has also created new job titles, at higher pay, to replace existing positions — subbing "management assistants," for example, for some administrative secretaries, at a pay range $8,000 to $15,000 higher.

Chief community-relations officer Christine Wroblewski, who has worked for the last three superintendents, said the district has had different administrative structures at different times.

Carstarphen had departments audited, Wroblewski said, and in some cases, more staffers and greater expertise were needed to support the changes she was hired to carry out.

And spending on district administration as a percentage of general-fund expenditures is relatively low in St. Paul, officials point out: 3.3 percent, according to 2008 data, compared with 4.2 percent for all districts statewide.

Along with the staff realignments, Carstarphen required a higher level of personal accountability than some were used to, Wroblewski said.

"The expectations from Dr. Carstarphen are very high," she said. "There is no ambiguity around who is responsible.

"There was a definite culture shift in that first year when she came here," Wroblewski added, and people were forced to evaluate whether their job was a good fit for them anymore.

"We needed to change," she said. "Doing the right thing requires courage, and it can be difficult."

SURVEYING THE BOARD

Ultimately, the people who will decide whether Carstarphen has created staffing problems that need to be addressed with the next hire are the seven members of the school board.

Three — Anne Carroll, John Brodrick and Tom Goldstein — declined to comment.

Keith Hardy said that after Carstarphen, he will look for a "servant leader" whose people-management skills are as strong as his or her technical and goal-setting abilities.

He has visited every school, and more than half the principals have told him they're "operating in an environment of fear," he said.

The layers of administration made it difficult for them to communicate with Carstarphen directly, and instead of support and collaboration, they got finger-pointing and a "blaming and shaming environment," Hardy said.

Tom Conlon, the board's longest-serving member, said staff complaints about Carstarphen are no worse than what he's heard about every superintendent.

Some of the criticism of Carstarphen is likely just general stress over the program changes she presided over, said board Vice Chairwoman Elona Street-Stewart.

Board Chairwoman Kazoua Kong-Thao said she would hire Carstarphen again.

"We needed her to help us make some of those changes," said Kong-Thao. "Is this all perfect? No, it's not. There's always room for improvement.

"Meria just has a different personality," Kong-Thao said. "It makes some people uncomfortable."

Article 19 **Top**

The Denver Post
Spring cleaning: Summer is for school, too
5.03.09

Van Schoales and Alan Gottlieb (Op Ed)

Our spring cleaning project for education requires brooms and a high tolerance for dust that has accumulated over generations. We want to sweep away the outmoded agrarian calendar that severely limits student learning — at least for those kids who persistently underachieve.

The basic structure of the U.S. school calendar has been around for more than a century. In its time, the calendar made sense. The U.S. was an agrarian society, and kids needed free time in the summer to lend a hand on the farm.

Obviously, that's no longer the case. But long-held cultural beliefs and varied interest groups — affluent parents who want to take lengthy summer trips, underpaid teachers who see summers off as a fringe benefit — make it difficult to change the calendar. And, yes, it will cost more money.

We are not outliers on this topic. When U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan visited Denver last month, he stood before a group of students and delivered a similar message, which, while not popular with kids, is eminently sensible: American kids need more time in school, particularly for those so far behind. In Colorado, that turns out to be at least one-third of students.

More time does not mean a bit of extracurricular tutoring a couple of afternoons each week. It means longer school days, the occasional Saturday class and, most important, a longer school year.

The typical U.S. K-12 school holds classes for 180 days each year. (Denver schools are holding just 172 days of class during the 2008-09 school year.) Many other industrialized nations top 200 days per year, with some Asian nations hitting 240 days. As President Obama pointed out last month, a Korean high school graduate has spent a year more in school than his or her American counterpart.

Research proves that low-income children enter kindergarten far below middle-class kids in early literacy and language development. Equal doses administered in the same ways will not catch these kids up.

Many children lose ground over the summer unless they have access to a rich education/learning program. For this reason, learning gaps grow over time when the time and instruction are fixed in the 20th century factory model.

No one would design the current calendar or school schedules based on a modern economy. So why do we continue to tolerate it?

Van Schoales is program officer for urban education at The Piton Foundation. Alan Gottlieb is editor of Education News Colorado (www.ednewscolorado.org).

Article 20 **Top**

Omaha World Herald
Turnaround a feather in cap of once-struggling student
5.03.09

Paul Goodsell

In fourth grade, Enoch Pugh was in special education. He read poorly and struggled with his schoolwork. He was introverted and suffered from asthma.

Fast forward several years.

Last May, Enoch graduated from high school on time, with honors. At graduation, he wore the special gold cord that identified members of the National Honor Society.

He won an array of awards from a statewide art contest. He played power forward on Omaha North High's varsity basketball team, besides running track and cross-country. At his senior prom, he was elected king.

Now he's finished his freshman year at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where he is studying fashion and graphic design.

It's a stunning turnaround — one that is all too rare among youths who struggle early in school.

For example, only 44 percent of blacks who scored below the 25th percentile in fifth grade on the California Achievement Test graduated on time, according to a World-Herald study of recent graduation patterns. And only 3 percent of those students finished high school with a B average or better.

Enoch's mother, Carolyn Rogers, was determined not to let her son fail.

"I would go and meet with his teachers religiously," she said. "I even got special outside tutoring that I paid for. I cried when I had to put him in special ed."

Enoch had help at school and from his tutor, who recognized that he had a different learning style.

"Creative people learn differently," his mother said. "This lady just turned on the light bulb."

At home, Rogers said, she would check his homework, even if she was tired after a late shift at Physicians Mutual, where she did data entry. If he used the wrong word,

she would correct him. If he missed school because of illness, she was sure to have him make up the work.

And as Enoch improved, his mother didn't let him get away with low standards. Receiving a B wasn't good enough if Enoch was capable of earning an A.

At UNL, Enoch passed his fall semester courses, but his grades weren't great. He said he would have been better prepared for college if he had challenged himself more as a high school senior. Second semester was better.

"It's a lot about time management," said Enoch, who also plays intramural basketball and sings in a gospel choir.

Rogers said she's seeing her son become an independent, well-rounded man who puts God first and does his best.

"It's important for him to grow up to be a good man," she said.

Article 21 **Top**

The Charlotte Observer
New project seeks to improve schools
5.03.09

Karen Sullivan

A new project in Charlotte is designed to create advocates for Mecklenburg's lowest-performing public schools.

Three west Charlotte organizations last week became the first hosts for Achieve Together, a volunteer service project organized by The Lee Institute, a nonprofit leadership development organization.

Groups of concerned citizens met for the first of five weekly community circles at Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, Johnson C. Smith University and Philip O. Berry Recreation Center.

Each group is working to develop theories for change in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' Achievement Zone, which is composed of 11 schools where test scores and achievement are low and poverty often is high.

The ideas each group develops could include policies or practices for reducing the dropout rate and improving success rates for students.

"It's not becoming involved with one particular child. It's driving for change at a school or the Achievement Zone," said Libby Cable, director of The Lee Institute.

The project is funded by a two-year, nearly $490,000 grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which has a history in Charlotte. In 2007, it awarded CMS a three-year, nearly $1.5 million grant for training and staff, said Chris Williams, spokesman for the foundation.

The purpose of the CMS grant is to help Achievement Zone high schools collect information they can use to find ways to improve.

The foundation awarded a separate grant to The Lee Institute to get the community involved in supporting Achievement Zone schools. CMS officials say this is vital for boosting student achievement.

The Lee Institute found three locations for community circles and hopes to create more in the future. Each group has up to 10 members.

The groups will be "looking at data nationally and getting some training in how to get their voices heard and navigate complex systems and push for positive change in their community," Cable said.

The idea of supporting schools appealed to Deborah Brown Quick, chair of Johnson C. Smith University's Social Sciences Department. She joined the community circle on the campus.

"I'm really concerned, particularly about the high dropout rate among young black men," Brown Quick said.

The number of black CMS dropouts was 1,404 last year, compared with 445 whites. In 2006-07, more than 1,500 blacks and just under 600 whites dropped out.

"What will emerge probably is a myriad of things to be done," Brown Quick said. "Some of them will be advocating for policy changes. Some people were also saying volunteering to be mentors also would be good."

Article 22 **Top**

The Charlotte Observer
Ancient art is P.E. for the mind
5.03.09

Jeff Wilhelm

The students in the phys ed class at Newton Conover Health Science High School lie still on the floor – some on their backs and some on their stomachs, eyes closed. A few doze.

Teacher J. P. Nelson walks slowly around and between them, talking quietly about floating off over mountains and oceans or turning inward to peaceful places within.

It's a far cry from the noisy groups that first entered the gym and light years away from dodgeball. The main activity in this P.E. class is tai chi, the ancient Chinese internal martial art practiced for physical health and mental calm and clarity.

The small Newton school is a Gates Foundation School, funded mainly with grants from the charity created by Microsoft founder Bill Gates and his wife. This gives the faculty some license to experiment.

Principal Jerry Willard faces the same hurdles as any school administrator. "One of the biggest challenges in public school today is getting kids to focus, and teachers complain about that all the time. They (students) can't stay on track. How do we get people to do that?"

In his research into mental development, Willard had come across tai chi. Reports indicated that kids who took tai chi learned greater mental focus, and the form

exercises have health benefits as well.

“That is why we brought it here,” he said. “If we are a health science high school, what are we doing to improve students' health?”

Martial arts instructor J.P. Nelson was presenting tai chi as an art form at a local school when Willard first saw it in action. The discipline is recognized by most people in the west as a slow dance done by large groups of people in parks.

Nelson was offered a contract to bring his program to the Health Science High School, and this is the third semester it is being offered. “I've always advocated that P.E. is supposed to be physical education, not just playing a bunch of games,” Nelson said. “It (regular P.E.) is fun, I guess, but they're not really learning anything unless they are athletes.”

Willard conceded that tai chi is not for everybody. “A lot of students don't like it because it is so slow and formative. The thing they don't realize is that it's moving every single muscle group in the body, it's moving the mind, it's moving everything.” Other students have seen an improvement in their academic classroom experience, finding it easier to sit quietly and pay attention.

Freshmen Briannen Arey and Melinda Wagner take the class seriously. “It definitely makes you more aware of yourself, where you are moving and what you are doing” said Briannen.

Melinda said it has helped her as a student. “At the beginning of the school year I would say I was a lot more tired, I just didn't want to be here. With this, for some reason, I just feel more aware of my surroundings, I feel more awake.”

Nelson has been practicing tai chi for more than 20 years, in addition to mastering several other fighting martial arts. He has his own martial arts school, American Nine Lotus Academy, in nearby Brookford. He considers tai chi to be one of the most important martial arts, one that goes beyond self-defense to whole body healing.

“It is a complete art, and if you are doing it … two or three times a week, it's going to radically improve your cardiovascular system. It is an athlete's dream; it develops surefootedness, balance, coordination and grace. Their muscle system is being formatted, imprinted with movements they'll use in everyday life, even if they don't know it.”

Students take the class three days a week, learning form exercises on Wednesday and Thursday. Tuesday is the day for guided meditation, where quiet and calm are taught. “The goal is not to fall asleep,” Nelson explains, “although some do because they don't know how to properly relax.”

The goal is for the student to ask, “Who am I really? Why do I do what I do?” What Nelson is trying to do, he said using computer terms, is “have the students do a system clean up, and then defragment.”

“It's subliminal teaching in a positive manner. I teach how to think, not what to think. That way, they can be individuals.”

The Washington Post
World-class knowledge
5.04.09

Maria Glod

Politicians fret these days about how U.S. students stack up in math and science compared with peers in India, China, Singapore and elsewhere. Some of them wonder how many American children could find those countries on a globe. Such talk is driving an effort in Congress to ensure that students learn more about other countries and cultures.

Critics of the No Child Left Behind law, which requires annual math and reading tests in grades three through eight and once in high school, say it has pushed subjects including geography, history and art to the side.

Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) and other lawmakers are trying to change that with a bill called the Teaching Geography is Fundamental Act. The legislation would provide funds for teacher training, research and development of instructional materials.

Van Hollen said he has been distressed by surveys showing that students in the United States have a poor grasp of geography. He said the bill has bipartisan support and 70 co-sponsors.

"We are now in a world where we have to compete globally," Van Hollen said. "It's important for American students to understand the geography of the world they are living in."

Bound for the Bee

Some students don't need new laws to encourage them to study geography.

This month, 55 elementary and middle school students from across the country who share a passion for globes and maps will converge in the District for the annual National Geographic Bee. The competitors demonstrated their smarts by winning state-level bees April 3.

Two local students will face off in the May 20 competition, sponsored by the National Geographic Society. Sidharth Verma, 12, a seventh-grader at Rachel Carson Middle School in Fairfax County, was the Virginia champion. Michael Laskowski, 13, in seventh grade at St. Anselm's Abbey School, bested other students in the District.

The Maryland winner, James Devinne, is a sixth-grader at Dumbarton Middle School in Baltimore.

The students already have won $100, a world atlas and the trip to the District for the competition. First prize in the national bee is a $25,000 college scholarship and a lifetime membership in the National Geographic Society. The champion, along with one parent, also wins a trip to the Galapagos Islands with Alex Trebek, host of "Jeopardy!" and moderator of the national bee.

The runner-up will receive a $15,000 scholarship. The third-place prize is a $10,000 scholarship.

(There are 55 contestants, not 51, because bees also are held in the Pacific territories, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Department of Defense schools.)

Michael and Sidharth say they've been drawn to maps as far back as they can remember.

A 'GPS in the Back Seat'

Elementary school students generally look to teachers for help when they have questions. But when Sidharth was in kindergarten, his teacher called him when she needed an answer.

Sidharth recalled that his teacher had gotten lost on her way to Reston Town Center. Knowing Sidharth's passion for maps and directions, she called from the car. He guided her there in no time.

"She told me what street she was on, which direction and what just passed," Sidharth said. "She was actually pretty close."

Sidharth's mother, Ranju Verma, who teased that her son is a "GPS sitting in the back seat," was not surprised. Sidharth has always been so captivated by geography that he does MapQuest searches for fun.

"He can draw road maps of Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia," she said.

Verma said her son was hooked from the moment he got a globe for Christmas when he was 4 years old. "He memorized everything on the globe by the time he was 5," she said. "Every kid has a different passion."

Sidharth is a "Jeopardy!" fan, watches the Travel Channel and reads fact books about the world. He'll sit at the computer and do online searches for such categories as "important cities of Romania." Most nights after dinner, he scans an atlas. (He has four of the world and one of the United States.)

"It's the world on paper," Sidharth said. "You can just see the whole world."

He added: "I remember first memorizing seven continents and the capitals of the bigger countries, and then I moved to smaller countries."

And how many countries are there?

"There are 194 or [195]," he said. "Depends on how you count."

Sidharth said he won the state bee with an educated guess. The question: "Pula is an important industrial center or tourist resort on the Adriatic Sea in what country?"

The answer is Croatia.

"I knew the countries on the Adriatic Sea and I guessed," he said. "I really doubted this answer, but it turned out right."

Flights of Imagination

Michael fell in love with geography from a bird's-eye view.

His father, knowing Michael's interest in airplanes, got him a flight simulator made by Microsoft. And although Michael loved "flying," he was struck by the scenery below.

"I found myself flying to these really neat places," he said. "You can fly around the world with these real neat graphics. You see mountain ranges, and you see big valleys."

On his virtual flights, he's soared over Istanbul, New Delhi, Bangkok and Beijing. One of his favorite trips, though, is to Jackson Hole, Wyo., where his family has a vacation cabin.

Michael said it has become his habit to pause the simulator, pull out an atlas and study each region to learn the names of cities, lakes and mountain ranges. Last year, as a sixth-grader at St. Anselm's, he took a geography class. It was his favorite subject.

Michael said he faced fierce competition in the District bee, winning after eight rounds of tiebreaker questions. Finally he was able to correctly identify El Salvador as the coffee-producing country in Central America with the smallest land area.

At home, Michael often picks up the globe that sits on the family's coffee table. On family road trips, he likes to follow the route and learn how roads connect.

When he gets nervous during a bee, he concentrates on the wall in the back of a room and pictures a globe in his imagination.

"It just kind spins around until it comes to the right place," he said.

Michael said he wants to become a historian and visit many of the places he's seen on maps.

"There's a whole world to explore out there," Michael said. "I find it kind of neat to look at all these places that are totally different from where we live and know that there are people living there."

Article 24 **Top**

Los Angeles Times
Schools may trim the week to stretch funds; To cash-strapped districts, a four-day schedule beats cutting staff. But parents worry about child care.
5.04.09

Nicholas Riccardi

Facing deep funding cuts during the economic downturn, increasing numbers of school districts nationwide are contemplating trimming the traditional school week to four days to save money.

A four-day week has long been confined to a few small rural districts looking to save on fuel costs. Indeed, many of the districts thinking of shaving a day off their weekly calendar have small enrollments -- such as the 940-student district in Bisbee, Ariz.

But some districts contemplating the move serve suburban or urban areas. The idea

is being floated in South Florida's Broward County, the nation's fifth-largest school system.

A recent University of Washington study found that states are cutting 18% of their education spending over the next three years, eliminating as many as 574,000 jobs.

"When everything's lean and states have no money and are cutting budgets to schools, it's an easy way to save money without cutting staff," said Gary Spiker, superintendent of the tiny Ash Fork School District in northern Arizona, which has had a four-day week since the 1980s.

Analysts say only about 100 of the nation's 15,000 districts operate on a four-day schedule. Eighteen states, including California, allow districts to choose a four-day week, and bills have been introduced in six states this year to permit it.

California's Department of Education does not track the number of districts on a four-day week. The state permits districts to shorten their week with specific legislative permission. This year, Alpaugh Unified School District in Tulare County is seeking that authority. And last month, Potter Valley Unified School District in Mendocino County shifted its high school to a four-day schedule.

Typically, districts that hold classes four days a week extend school hours 60 to 90 minutes per day. Education experts say there are no definitive data showing whether a four-day week benefits or harms students.

Some educators worry that young children will lose focus with a school day that can run from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. But the most common concern is voiced by parents who may have to scramble for an extra full day of child care.

"For parents, the issue is if Johnny's not in school on Monday or Friday, where is he going to be?" said Marc Egan of the National School Boards Assn.

Accordingly, large school districts approach the issue cautiously. In Douglas County, home to a ring of affluent suburbs southwest of Denver and Colorado's third-largest district, officials raised the idea of a four-day week during the district's budget process in January. The district was soon swamped with calls from angry and concerned parents.

"It was surprising to see how much attention we got for even uttering those words," spokeswoman Whei Wing said. "It is a big undertaking, and we want to make sure we have time to research the pluses and minuses."

The district can't rule out the concept because it has already had to cut 10% of its budget after local bond issues failed to pass in November. Meanwhile, it is bracing for a large funding cut from the state, which is wrestling with a $600-million deficit.

The biggest share of state budgets is education spending, and with states facing a combined $350-billion shortfall over the next three years, districts across the nation are seeing their budgets slashed, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

In Bisbee, 93 miles southeast of Tucson, Supt. Gail Covington assumed her post last summer and surveyed the damage. The district had no guidance counselor or advanced-placement courses in its one high school, and libraries in two other schools had been shuttered. Covington suggested a four-day week.

"In tough economic times, we just can't keep doing things the way we have," she said.

Her school board unanimously approved, and Bisbee will switch to the new calendar in August. But parents are worried.

Adel Lewis, who has three children in the district, says she's spoken with parents who are trying to transfer their children to neighboring, five-day districts. Her 8-year-old will spend Fridays with her grandmother. The school board is hoping money from the federal stimulus package will fund new day care slots, but Lewis is skeptical.

"It is a big leap and it is kind of scary," Lewis said.

Conversely, Cathy Hobbs can't imagine her children spending five days in school. She lives in the East Grand School District in the mountains of northern Colorado, which switched to a four-day schedule in 1982. Hobbs and her husband run a log-home-building business and were able to rearrange their schedule to provide child care.

In their recreation-heavy community -- just south of Rocky Mountain National Park -- the Hobbses didn't have to worry about their children staying idle on Fridays. Local towns have programs to take youths to ski resorts, and Hobbs' two daughters learned to ski and snowboard during their days off.

"If I were in Denver and I were working a career down there, I would probably want a four-day week," Hobbs said. "So why should I want my kids to have a five-day week?"

Teachers are also fans of four-day weeks. Administrators in rural districts say it's one way they can entice teachers to take lower pay and live farther from big cities. That's one reason the 2,400-student Elizabeth School District, southeast of Denver, is considering a four-day week, said Supt. Paul Dellacroce.

Dellacroce previously was superintendent in a rural district with a four-day week and said convenience is a good argument for it. "With an extra day off, kids are a little more rested," he said. "The weekends are stuffed with karate, soccer games and church. This may be a way to give them a little more down time."

But larger districts remain wary. In the Broward County School District, spokeswoman Nadine Drew stressed that the proposal was only "one of many ideas that have been tossed out there in a brainstorming session." The district is mulling over many ways of saving $55 million this year, including mandatory furloughs for employees and ending sports at many schools.

The school district in Oregon City, a suburb of Portland, looked at a four-day week to help cut its budget by 13%, but Supt. Roger Rada has recommended against it. He said police had voiced concern about so many teenagers possibly being unsupervised on Fridays.

Instead, Rada will renegotiate union contracts in the hopes of saving money. Regardless, he expects to have to cut as many as 10% of his teaching positions. "It is really brutal right now," he said.

The Washington Post
Rare alliance may signal ebb in union's charter opposition
5.04.09

Jay Mathews

I didn't see many other reporters Tuesday in the narrow, second-floor meeting room of the Phoenix Park Hotel in the District. A U.S. senator's party switch and new National Assessment of Educational Progress data were a bigger draw. But in the long term, the news conference at the hotel might prove a milestone in public education. It isn't often you see a leading teachers union announce it is taking money from what many of its members consider the enemy: corporate billionaires who have been bankrolling the largely nonunion charter school movement.

Of course, it might turn out to be just another publicity stunt. But the people gathered, and what they said, impressed me.

Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, unveiled the first union-led, private foundation-supported effort to provide grants to AFT unions nationwide to develop and implement what she called "bold education innovations in public schools." The advisory board of the AFT Innovation Fund includes celebrities of my education wonk world: former Cleveland schools chief *Barbara Byrd-Bennett*, Stanford professor *Linda Darling-Hammond*, Harvard professor *Susan Moore Johnson* and even *Caroline Kennedy*, well known for other reasons but identified at the conference as an important fundraiser for New York schools.

The news release gushed about all the research by teachers that the $2.8 million fund would support, but I was more interested in the sources of the money, particularly the *Eli and Edythe Broad* Foundation and the *Bill and Melinda Gates* Foundation. I would have been less surprised to see *President Obama* receive a campaign contribution from former vice president *Richard B. Cheney*.

Consider the rivalries involved. Mice abhor cats. Redskins dislike Cowboys. Regular public school educators (particularly union members) and public charter school educators have a similarly adversarial relationship. Educators at regular public schools often tell me that charter schools -- also public but independent of school system rules -- are siphoning their funds and students. Charter people say regular public schools are captives of listless bureaucracies. The Washington Post last week announced for the first time separate awards for top D.C. regular and charter school leaders, because there seemed no chance to get the two sides to cooperate on picking the winners.

The Broad and Gates foundations have been on the charter schools' side for a long time. In the District, where the teachers union is an AFT local, this divide gets personal. Broad and Gates people have been friendly to D.C. Schools Chancellor *Michelle A. Rhee*, one of the few superintendents in the country who supports charters. Broad is thought to be one of the foundations promising to help fund Rhee's offer to give teachers big salary increases in return for surrendering tenure protections. Weingarten has much to say about how the D.C. teacher contract negotiations proceed, but she has given no sign of embracing Rhee's plan.

So why is she accepting the foundations' money? Her friends and adversaries say she always thinks several moves ahead. When I asked why she was dealing with

foundations whose support for charters is so unpopular with her members, she replied, "The ties that bind us are so much greater than the squabbles that divide us." AFT founder *Al Shanker*, she noted, was one of the first to suggest the charter concept, and AFT-run charters operate in New York.

It could be, as some cynics insist, that Weingarten is just trying to look reasonable and impress empty-headed optimists like me. She might have no intention of negotiating away the job protections that nonunion charter leaders can ignore as they create teacher teams to raise student achievement. But I think it is more than that. Younger teachers going into regular and charter schools, and into the AFT, appear more willing than older teachers to give up tenure for more pay and more impact on student achievement. Their friends working for Google and McKinsey and Goldman Sachs don't have tenure. Why should they? Teachers in the most successful charters are working longer hours but being paid more and having the satisfaction of seeing great improvement in their students. What's wrong with that?

Weingarten hears those voices. I think she wants to stay ahead of the generational shift. The GothamSchools Web site says she offered recently to stop using the word "tenure" if that will help win agreement on due process for teachers in trouble.

I struggle to understand union strategy and politics, usually too far from the classroom to interest me. But is it so crazy to think that, eventually, Weingarten will join Rhee in giving D.C. teachers a new and innovative contract, just as she has joined with Rhee's foundation friends to create a new fund for teacher innovation?

Article 26 **Top**

The Washington Post
'No Child' in action
5.04.09

Margaret Spellings (Op Ed)

Rising Scores Show Why We Can't Retreat

Student achievement results from the "nation's report card" published last week show that we are on the right track. Since enactment of the bipartisan No Child Left Behind Act, which called for all students to be on grade level in reading and math by 2014, students have been making progress in reading and math in elementary and middle school. Improvement has been greatest for African American and Hispanic students and those students who are lowest-achieving.

But in our high schools, the National Assessment of Educational Progress data tell a troubling story, especially in light of our need to compete in a global knowledge economy.

Scores continue to be flat for 17-year-olds in both reading and math over the almost 30-year history of the test. We know that only half of African American and Hispanic students graduate from high school on time. Yet policymakers have not had the courage to use the real accountability that is working in our elementary and middle schools in our high schools.

It's no accident that the United States has had nine straight years of increasing scores for elementary school students. In the decades before No Child Left Behind was signed into law in 2002 and the state reforms that led to it, taxpayers spent

hundreds of billions of dollars on education and hoped for the best. Since No Child Left Behind, we have expected results. The law required that every student in grades three through eight be assessed annually in reading and math, that those results be disaggregated and that the information be provided to educators and parents. And that is exactly the age group for which we are seeing results. Consider: In the 10 years since 1999, reading scores for 9-year-olds have risen eight points; in the nearly three decades before that, scores rose only four points. In the past 10 years, math scores have increased 11 points, while in the nearly three decades prior, scores rose only 13 points.

Teachers and principals who have embraced accountability have made these increases possible. And while this is good progress, we should not be satisfied. The achievement gap continues to plague our country. Because of the state and federal assessment data we now have, we know precisely which districts, schools, teachers and students need help and which are doing well. We've diagnosed the problem -- the approximately 4,000 schools that have failed to meet their annual goals for five straight years and the 2,000 high schools that produce more than half of all dropouts. Now we have to deal with those chronically low-performing schools -- the ones that need more than just tinkering around the edges.

That's why it is troubling that instead of fixing our lowest-performing schools, policymakers are diverting their attention toward discussing the need to raise standards to international levels. Do a significant number of states need to raise the bar? Yes, and I am hopeful that this rhetoric will lead to better, clearer, higher expectations for every student. I'm also for more sophisticated ways of measuring achievement and rewarding teachers who do the hardest work and get results. But we must not let up on an accountability approach that is showing results. As we focus on raising the bar, we must work urgently to turn around the schools that don't even meet minimal standards.

In the coming months, we will hear discussions about postponing grade-level achievement for all students by 2014. We will hear calls for more resources beyond the $100 billion in education funding in the federal stimulus package. We will hear that America cannot make further improvements in education until we spend more on the social safety net. We will hear lots of talk that, when boiled down, amounts to retreat from meaningful accountability and would delay requirements that our kids perform on grade level. Turning our attention away from the problem at hand will only slow down or stop the gains we are seeing across the country. Our children deserve better than that.

The writer was U.S. secretary of education from 2005 to 2009.

Article 27 **Top**

Sheboygan Press (WI)
Local students get hands-on study of space
5.04.09

Staff

Armory will be science classroom for nearly 800

More than 780 Sheboygan area students will participate in numerous hands-on space-oriented science lab activities during Space Education Week at the Sheboygan Armory.

The four days of activities are sponsored by the Great Lakes Aerospace Science and Education Center at Spaceport Sheboygan, the Kansas Cosmosphere and the Sheboygan Area School District.

"This is a tremendous partnership between Spaceport Sheboygan, the Kansas Cosmosphere — one of the nation's leaders in space education, and our local school system," said James Testwuide, chairman of the board of Spaceport Sheboygan, in a press release. "Not only will it help students understand the wonders and excitement of space science, but it will also spark an interest in learning more about the physics and reality of our universe."

Activities start today and continue on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Sessions for middle-school students will be from 8:45 to 11:30 a.m., while elementary students will be in session from noon to 2:30 p.m.

Participating schools include Urban, Horace Mann and Farnsworth middle schools along with Jackson, Jefferson, Pigeon River and Cleveland elementary schools.

During their half-day experience, students will work through four learning stations set up at the Sheboygan Armory, Spaceport Sheboygan's current home.

Activities include a temporary planetarium to transport them throughout the solar system, being able to visit a lunar outpost to gather information about an unknown planet and participating in various tasks to demonstrate the properties and effects of boiling points and chill factors.

The labs will be conducted by a representative from the Cosmosphere, Sheboygan district teachers, and Greg Mancari, outreach coordinator of the Denver Museum of Nature and Science.

Mancari, who is volunteering his time, will run the planetarium as well as train local educators to conduct future events of this nature.

Diane Wilcenski, the Sheboygan School District's assistant superintendent of student and instructional services, said the district is excited about Space Education Week.

"The experience gives our students the opportunity for hands-on activities relative to space which support the standards and benchmarks that they are expected to master in the classroom," Wilcenski said.

"The collaborative effort also enhances the science learning that is so important in today's global environment."

Article 28 **Top**

USA Today
Stimulus funds up the ante for public schools
5.04.09

Greg Toppo

WASHINGTON — Handing $100 billion to needy public schools in an economic crisis is an unalloyed good thing, right?

Depends.

School districts across the USA are gearing up to receive the first payments under the federal economic stimulus. It temporarily — and substantially — increases the federal government's share in funding public schools over the next two years, promising to save the threatened jobs of thousands of teachers. Education Secretary Arne Duncan calls it a "historic opportunity" to jump-start reforms that "will transform public education in America." He's pushing schools to use the money not just to save jobs but to improve student achievement.

A few observers say they're concerned that a two-year span is not — and has never been — enough time to generate big gains. By 2011, they say, critics of greater education spending will undoubtedly cite the dearth of results to push for less education spending — perhaps even an end to federal funding.

"If you were trying to set the system up to look bad, one good way to do it is to throw an awful lot of money at it — money it can't possibly absorb in two years — and then expect that you're going to see changes in student achievement," says David Shreve of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Could the very thing that Duncan hopes will push public education into the 21st century set it back decades?

"You can certainly imagine a scenario where this makes things tougher for public school advocates," says Rick Hess, an education policy expert at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank.

Looking ahead two years, he says, "I would be astonished if anything showed up — period."

That may be the nature of the stimulus, the vast majority of which aims simply at saving jobs. Of the $100 billion, $95 billion "is the cost of doing business," says Joe Williams of Democrats for Education Reform, a New York-based political action committee. Most of the remaining $5 billion, slated to go out this year, makes up Duncan's "Race to the Top Fund," a competitive grant that will reward innovation. Duncan says he'll withhold funding in the second year from districts that don't try something new, such as raising academic standards, adopting innovative teaching models, reassigning their best teachers to the neediest schools and investing in long-term student-tracking systems.

"Money gives you the leverage to bring people to the table and change the way things are done," he said last week.

Amy Wilkins of the Education Trust, an education advocacy group based in Washington, says that even if schools can't produce better academic results in two years, they can show "that we've broken the habit of 'business as usual' " by killing ineffective or unproven programs.

"This is sort of 'stand and deliver' time for education," she says. "If the education community doesn't deliver change with this money, this becomes 'TARP for Public Schools' — and that's a huge danger. The next time we go hat in hand, it's going to be awfully hard to justify another investment."

The Wall Street Journal
Arne Duncan's Choice; 'What works' for some kids, but not for others.
5.05.09

Editorial Board

Washington, D.C.'s school voucher program for low-income kids isn't dead yet. But the Obama Administration seems awfully eager to expedite its demise.

About 1,700 kids currently receive $7,500 vouchers to attend private schools under the Opportunity Scholarship Program, and 99% of them are black or Hispanic. The program is a huge hit with parents -- there are four applicants for every available scholarship -- and the latest Department of Education evaluation showed significant academic gains.

Nevertheless, Congress voted in March to phase out the program after the 2009-10 school year unless it is reauthorized by Congress and the D.C. City Council. The Senate is scheduled to hold hearings on the program this month, and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid has promised proponents floor time to make their case. So why is Education Secretary Arne Duncan proceeding as if the program's demise is a fait accompli?

Mr. Duncan is not only preventing new scholarships from being awarded but also rescinding scholarship offers that were made to children admitted for next year. In effect, he wants to end a successful program before Congress has an opportunity to consider reauthorizing it. This is not what you'd expect from an education reformer, and several Democrats in Congress have written him to protest.

We know that Barack and Michelle Obama have opted out of public schools in D.C. -- as they also did in Chicago -- and chosen a private school for their own girls. So have 44% of Senators and 36% of Representatives, according to a new Heritage Foundation report. Less well known is that Mr. Duncan has exercised another, far more common kind of school choice for his family.

Science magazine recently asked Mr. Duncan where his daughter attends school and "how important was the school district in your decision about where to live?" He responded: "She goes to Arlington [Virginia] public schools. That was why we chose where we live, it was the determining factor . . . I didn't want to try to save the country's children and our educational system and jeopardize my own children's education." It certainly is easier to champion public schools when you have your pick of the better ones (like the Duncans) or the means to send your children to a private school (like the Obamas).

The Education Department released its annual evaluation of the D.C. program last month -- tellingly, without a press release or media briefing -- and it showed that voucher recipients are reading nearly a half-grade ahead of their peers who didn't receive a scholarship. These academic benefits are compounding over time. The study revealed that the program's earliest participants are 19 months ahead of public school peers in reading after three years. Nationwide, black 12th graders as a group score lower on reading tests than white 8th graders. The D.C. voucher program is closing this achievement gap.

See if you can follow this political syllogism. President Obama and his Education Secretary have repeatedly promised to support "what works," regardless of ideology. The teachers unions adamantly oppose school vouchers, whether or not they work. Ergo, Messrs. Obama and Duncan decide to end a D.C. school voucher program that works and force poor kids back into schools where Messrs. Obama and Duncan would never send their own children. What a disgrace.

Article 30 **Top**

CNN
'High school dropout crisis' continues in U.S., study says
5.05.09

Staff

WASHINGTON (CNN) — Nearly 6.2 million students in the United States between the ages of 16 and 24 in 2007 dropped out of high school, fueling what a report released Tuesday called "a persistent high school dropout crisis."

The total represents 16 percent of all people in the United States in that age range in 2007. Most of the dropouts were Latino or black, according to a report by the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts, and the Alternative Schools Network in Chicago, Illinois.

"Because of the widespread, pressing nature of the crisis and the large numbers of young people who have already dropped out, a national re-enrollment strategy should be a fundamental part of America's national education agenda," the report says.

However, the report notes, the "absence of new funding at the federal and state level since the 1980s has led to decades of disinvestment in re-enrollment programs across the country."

Despite the funding cutbacks, there have been re-enrollment successes nationally and in a number of cities including Chicago; Los Angeles, California; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Portland, Oregon, the report says.

"These programs have found that young people who have left high school before earning a diploma are not dead-end dropouts, but often are in fact students waiting and looking for opportunities to re-enroll and finish high school," the study says. "The most successful programs are small (80-150 students), offering comprehensive after-school and summer activities, led by experienced principals and teachers, focused on learning in the real world, well-funded with local school site program and fiscal control, and track specific, measurable outcomes for student achievement including skill gains, enrollment, attendance, credit gains, promotions and graduations."

Jesse Williams, 22, was one of those dropouts who is now working on her degree.

She said a street shooting in which one friend died and two were wounded was the start of her losing interest in school.

"My junior year I dropped out," she said at a summit in Washington on Tuesday. "Too much gang violence, teachers discriminating because of the color of my skin, or where I come from."

Now re-enrolled in a Chicago school dedicated to bringing dropouts back to education, Williams said, "They help me in my classwork. I have a mentor that checks up on me monthly. She goes to my house, sees if there's anything that I need."

Researchers for the study analyzed the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Surveys, household data from the Current Population Survey, national data on GED certificate awards and other official sources to examine the problem at the national level and in the nation's 12 largest states: California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia.

Men and blacks and Hispanics of both genders are among those particularly prone to dropping out of high school.

"As these data show, this dropout crisis is disproportionately affecting America's communities of color," said Marc Morial, president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League. "Youth from all communities deserve an equal chance at educational success."

Among the findings in the report, "Left Behind in America: The Nation's Dropout Crisis:"

- Nearly one in five U.S. men between the ages of 16 and 24 (18.9 percent) were dropouts in 2007.
- Nearly three of 10 Latinos, including recent immigrants, were dropouts (27.5 percent).
- More than one in five blacks dropped out of school (21 percent). The dropout rate for whites was 12.2 percent.
- The dropout situation at the state level was similarly widespread:
- More than one in 10 people ages 16 to 24 years old had dropped out of high school in each of the 12 states surveyed.
- More than one in five 16- to 24-year-olds were dropouts in Florida and Georgia.
- California had the most dropouts of any state (710,000), with a 14.4 percent dropout rate among 16- to 24-year-olds.
- Georgia had the highest dropout rate for this population at 22.1 percent.

The report emphasized the importance of having at least a high school education.

"In the current global economy, having at least a high school diploma is a critical step for avoiding poverty, and a college degree is a prerequisite for a well-paying job," the study says. "The costs of dropping out of high school today are substantial and have risen over time, especially for young men, who find it almost impossible to earn an adequate income to take care of themselves and their families."

The report goes on to note: "Americans without a high school diploma have considerably lower earning power and job opportunities in today's workforce. Over a working lifetime from ages 18-64, high school dropouts are estimated to earn $400,000 less than those that graduated from high school. For males, the lifetime earnings loss is nearly $485,000 and exceeds $500,000 in many large states. Due to their lower lifetime earnings and other sources of market incomes, dropouts will contribute far less in federal, state and local taxes than they will receive in cash benefits, in-kind transfers and correctional costs. Over their lifetimes, this will impose a net fiscal burden on the rest of society.

"By contrast, adults with high school diplomas contribute major fiscal benefits to the country over their lifetime. The combined lifetime fiscal benefits -- including the payment of payroll, federal, and state income taxes --- could amount to more than $250,000 per graduated student. Such a public fiscal benefit more than outweighs the estimated cost of enrolling a student who has dropped out."

Article 31 **Top**

Forbes
Ohio governor: Economy linked with education
5.05.09

Stephen Majors

Ohio can only enter an economic revival by refusing to be deterred by financial obstacles and by immediately reforming its out-of-date educational system, Gov. Ted Strickland said Monday in trying to rally support for his ambitious educational agenda.

Strickland used lofty rhetoric and historical images to sell his education plan to a gathering of the influential Columbus Metropolitan Club - and to the skeptical Republican-controlled Senate preparing to take up his proposal.

"If we let this moment pass, we will not only have failed our state, we will not only have demonstrated timidity in the face of challenge, we will have sinned against our children," said Strickland, a Democrat. "So, even in the midst of these challenging economic circumstances, let us commit to moving forward."

The Senate this week takes up the two-year budget proposal that contains Strickland's education plan. The week began with Strickland's speech. It will end with a joint appearance in Columbus on Friday by Strickland and U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan.

For the past two months, much of the discussion surrounding Strickland's plan has focused on the policy details of updating the curriculum and fixing the school-funding system, and on the budgeting behind those efforts. But on Monday, Strickland returned to the more thematic style of his State of the State speech in February by linking the state's economic success to the efforts to overhaul Ohio's schools.

"In the early days of statehood, Ohio's strength was the richness of our soil. Ohio's strength was the currents of our rivers. Ohio's strengths was canals and railroads. Ohio's strength was our brawn," Strickland said. "But, my friends, in the days and decades ahead, a strong Ohio will require creative minds and innovative thinkers."

Throughout his campaign for governor, Strickland talked about his "Turnaround Ohio" plans. His speech Monday rested on a new key word: "revival."

"It is no secret, education revivals lead to economic revivals - because great students go on to be great workers who can excel and thrive in the changing, modern marketplace," Strickland said after comparing the country's lower educational and economic attainment to countries including China and Switzerland.

Strickland's school-funding plans revolve around funding the needs of individual students and school districts based on the latest research findings, and increasing the state's share of funding to lessen reliance on local property taxes. The governor wants to change the curriculum to revolve around interdisciplinary and problem-solving skills, and wants to lengthen the school year by 20 days.

Strickland's plan relies heavily on one-time federal economic stimulus money to get it off the ground over the next two years. Republicans fear that will leave the state unable to continue its efforts in future years when it can rely only on its own resources. Republicans are also concerned about the topdown approach of the plan, and about what they call "unfunded mandates" for school districts to offer all-day kindergarten, lengthen the school year and meet class size requirements.

House lawmakers relaxed portions of Strickland's plan so that school districts could maintain the status quo in the first year, and that the timeline for implementation would expand from eight to 10 years.

Article 32 **Top**

The Washington Post
White House seeks comments on education law
5.05.09

Libby Quaid

BUNKER HILL, W.Va. -- Special education teacher Lynn Reichard has a problem with the federal No Child Left Behind law: Some of her kids cannot read, never mind pass its required state test.

Reichard told Education Secretary Arne Duncan on Tuesday that she works all year long to boost the self-esteem of mentally impaired students at Bunker Hill Elementary, only to see them fall apart over standardized tests.

"They feel so good about themselves, and then they look at a two-paragraph reading passage, and they know six words," Reichard said. "I have one child here that's a nonreader, and she's going to have to take the test, and she's going to cry.

"There's just got to be another answer for that," Reichard said.

Reichard was among a dozen teachers and parents who met with Duncan as the Obama administration considers changing the controversial law championed by former President George W. Bush.

No Child Left Behind pushes schools to boost the performance of low-achieving students, and Duncan gives the law credit for shining a spotlight on kids who need the most help. Opponents, however, insist the law's annual reading and math tests

have squeezed subjects like music and art out of the classroom and that schools were promised billions of dollars they never received.

Duncan wants to hear how the program works from educators, parents and kids, and he began a 15-state "listening tour" at Reichard's school in the eastern panhandle of rural West Virginia. President Barack Obama has been vague about much he would overhaul the law, but on Tuesday, his ideas began to take shape.

The teacher was right, Duncan said later.

While the law does make allowances for different tests for severely impaired kids, many don't fall into that category.

"To have a child taking a test that it is literally impossible for them to pass and having that humiliation, and holding schools accountable for that, that doesn't make sense," Duncan said in an interview with the Associated Press.

Duncan used Reichard's tale as an example of how the federal government should be "looser" about how states meet goals. He fought the government on similar issues in his last job, as chief executive of Chicago's public schools.

At the same time, he said, the government should get "tighter" about goals, insisting on more rigorous academic standards that are uniform across the states.

"What I mean by loose is not getting away from accountability at all," he told the AP. "What I mean by loose is giving folks more flexibility in how they achieve their goals."

Duncan made time to visit with kids, reading the book, "Doggie Dreams" to first-graders at Bunker Hill and having lunch with fourth-graders at Eagle Intermediate School in Martinsburg, where he ate a cheesesteak sandwich and onion rings but finished only half his vegetables.

"Who's the president now?" Duncan asked the first-graders, one of whom correctly identified Obama.

Duncan said little about the law Tuesday, preferring to listen to the concerns of teachers in more intimate sessions at elementary schools and a larger forum at Blue Ridge Community College in Martinsburg.

Both schools are high-performing and rely heavily on sophisticated data systems to explain not only what kids don't know, but why they don't know it, something Duncan wants to see more. Federal dollars in the economic stimulus law can be used for those kinds of systems.

Duncan said he won't hesitate to visit struggling schools, too.

Whatever the administration decides to do, it needs the approval of Congress, which passed the law with broad bipartisan support in 2001 but deadlocked over a rewrite in 2007. Lawmakers plan to try again in the fall.

While the law has helped improve the academic performance of many minority kids, English-language learners and kids with disabilities, critics say the law is too punitive: More than a third of schools failed to meet yearly progress goals last year, according to the Education Week newspaper.

That means millions of children are a long way from reaching the law's ambitious goals. The law pushes schools to improve test scores each year, so that every student can read and do math on grade level by the year 2014.

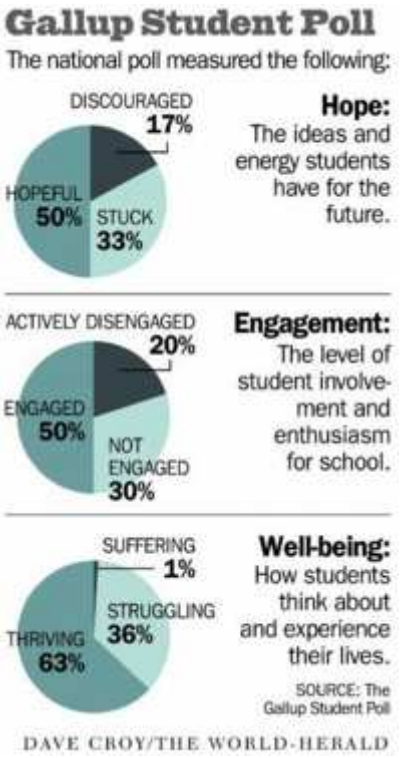
Article 33 **Top**

Omaha World Herald
Student poll to guide OPS
5.05.09

Michaela Saunders

Results of a first-of-its-kind poll released Tuesday will directly influence decisions made by the Omaha Public Schools.
The Gallup Student Poll gauges students' perceptions of their own engagement, hope and well-being — all factors linked by research to academic success.

More than 5,450 students in eight OPS schools were among the participants in the national Gallup Student Poll.



Results will be used to measure progress in keeping students in school and getting them across the graduation stage, ready for college or productive work lives.

Schools recently got data about their poll participants and are looking at ways to use the data. For example, mentoring resources could be targeted to a grade level at a particular school where students show low scores on engagement or hope.

"The national dropout problem is not just a teacher, parent or principal problem," Gallup Chairman and CEO Jim Clifton said in a statement. "That is why we have invented needed new technology which closely tracks student states of mind."

Nationwide, about 1.2 million students leave high school without a diploma each year. According to a World-Herald analysis first reported Sunday, about 1,000 students each year don't graduate with their classmates from metro-area high schools.

As the Omaha metro area grapples with how to improve those results, OPS research official Carla Noerrlinger said the results of the poll will be valuable to both community leaders and policymakers across the metro.

It is likely that all OPS fifth- through 12th-graders will participate in the poll next fall and beyond, allowing the district and others to track progress in increasing engagement among students.

Omaha Superintendent John Mackiel said the results of the poll should help focus local and national discussion and efforts related to dropout prevention and student achievement because "it affirms what every educator knows . . . hope and

engagement impact achievement."

Educational research has linked hope to educational factors such as high school grade-point average, school attendance and even college retention. Well-being includes the belief that the student has an adult who cares about him or her.

In all, 70,000 students from 58 school districts participated in the first Gallup Student Poll. Students in grades five to 12 took an online survey that lasted about 15 minutes. The questions were designed to measure students' perception of their hope, engagement and well-being. The poll will be conducted twice each year, with the next poll planned for October.

Among the national results:

- 52 percent said they were treated with respect all day yesterday.
- 94 percent of students believe they will graduate from high school.
- 86 percent of students believe they will get a good job after high school.

Noerrlinger said hope, engagement and well-being among OPS student poll participants closely match the results of the poll nationwide.

Article 34 **Top**

Chicago Sun-Times
Fixing No Child Left Behind a start in right directions
5.06.09

Commentary

On Tuesday, U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan began a multi-state "listening tour" -- a warmup for the massive task that lies ahead: reauthorization later this year of the highly controversial federal No Child Left Behind law.

The law mandates annual testing, requires states to highlight test scores for ethnic, racial and other subgroups and punishes schools that fail to meet testing goals. The law is due for a major overhaul, though we expect the buzz in the coming weeks will focus on improving high schools.

For good reason. Two recent studies show how far we have to go.

Last week, we learned that average scores in 2008 for 17-year-olds were no better than scores of 17-year-olds in the early 1970s. This reflects, in part, a change in demographics as higher-scoring white students have been replaced over time by lower-scoring minorities. But the results of this highly regarded national test also affirm a widely held belief: too many high schools aren't cutting it.

Then, on Tuesday, we learned how severe our nation's high school drop-out problem is. In 2007, nearly 6.2 million 16 to 24-year-olds were high school dropouts. That's 16 percent of all 16- to 24-year-olds, according to research by the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University in Boston and the Alternative Schools Network in Chicago.

The study's authors, along with several Chicago groups, are pushing for $2 billion in federal money to re-enroll 480,000 dropouts each year in small, comprehensive alternative high schools. They also wants Congress to set aside money in the No Child reauthorization to re-enroll dropouts.

Duncan hasn't signed on to their plan but he and President Obama have said they want to attack the dropout problem. Obama is expected to include some money for it in his 2010 budget, due out Thursday, and states can use stimulus money for re-enrollment or to prevent dropouts.

The focus on dropouts is dead-on, but states should first use stimulus money to re-enroll students who have dropped out and to discourage others from leaving school to begin with before Congress considers a new $2 billion program. We agree, though, that re-enrollment funding should be embedded in the No Child law.

We lose thousands of kids each day -- they drop out or are cheated out of a quality high school education. Fixing the No Child law isn't the only answer, but it's a start.

Article 35 **Top**

Newsweek
Classroom cop
5.06.09

Dirk Johnson

Ron Huberman walked the halls at Julian High School on Chicago's South Side one day in late March. Students were loitering in the lobby, wearing caps backward and sideways. The place was dirty. Even the clocks were wrong. Huberman, the new school chief installed by Mayor Richard M. Daley, did not like what he saw. He promptly moved to fire the principal.

Huberman later told the teachers at Julian: "You are going to be held accountable." He was not bluffing. At 16 other schools, he has canned the entire faculty and staff?and he's only been on the job since February.

The effect has been a sonic boom to a school system, the nation's third largest, that is mired in urban woes and, in some cases, a sense of complacency. "It's been a huge change in the culture," said Robert Runcie, the chief administrative officer. "His management style is data driven. He wants results. It doesn't matter if you work 300 hours a week. If it doesn't make a difference for the students, it's not working. He's really shaking things up."

It has been 13 years since Mayor Richard M. Daley seized control of Chicago's school system, creating a new template for urban education. City hall now runs the classrooms in New York, Boston, Cleveland and a handful of other major American cities. The Chicago model has also gone federal. President Obama reached into the city's system to tap Arne Duncan as education secretary; he brings to the national stage a penchant for merit pay and charter schools, a determination to close failing schools and a reasonably amiable relationship with the powerful teachers' unions, which may soon be put to the test. Duncan recently warned that he may withhold federal education stimulus money from states that limit the number of charter schools caps typically backed by the unions. Success won't come easy.

"We're going to see some real drama on the education horizon," said Timothy

Knowles, the director of the Urban Education Institute at the University of Chicago, which has designed some new schools for the city. "This is the first time we're hearing some of these calls for more parent choice and competition coming from the Democratic side nationally."

To gauge how the battle might go, it is worth watching Huberman, who has had a fight on his hands from the start. When Daley brought control of the schools to city hall, he was determined to move beyond the traditional profile of a schools chief. In choosing Huberman, he threw convention to the wind. The 37-year-old Huberman, who is gay, was born in Israel, grew up partly in Tennessee and has spent much of his career as a cop.

Huberman was chasing gangbangers in 2001 when he caught the mayor's eye. A technology whiz, Huberman had developed a laptop-computer program that enabled officers in squad cars to instantly trace the backgrounds of suspects at crime scenes. He subsequently helped mastermind the city's crime-surveillance camera system.

When Daley learned about the innovations of "this smart young cop," as the mayor calls him, he put Huberman on the fast track, tapping him first as his chief of staff, then putting him in charge of the city's transit system. In a city hall where aides often step gingerly around the powerful mayor, known for his fits of temper and tongue lashings, Huberman has earned a reputation for being blunt and confident enough to disagree with Daley on issues. "I tell the mayor things he doesn't always want to hear," says Huberman. "He respects that."

For his part, Daley has said he "can sleep at night" knowing the schools are Huberman's hands. If the new schools chief has upset entrenched interests and caused some alarm in the ranks about higher expectations, Daley could not be more pleased. He says he wishes more parents shared Huberman's indignation over school failures. "He's making the difficult decisions," says Daley. "He's not afraid to do that."

But the teachers union voiced indignation over the pick. Union president Marilyn Stewart accused Daley of cronyism, "an act of disrespect" to career educators. She noted that the new schools chief would not be qualified to teach in the system. "Just because you've been to a dentist," she scoffed, "doesn't mean you can be a dentist." (Daley's earlier picks for school boss, Duncan and Paul Vallas, were also unorthodox, at least by the measure of traditional school politics. Neither were career educators. But Duncan had worked as a top aide at school headquarters before taking over the top job. And Vallas had at least a brief stint as a teacher.)

Critics have also taken aim at the very system of mayoral control, arguing that such a concentration of power at city hall can lead to abuse. In New York, where the legislature is considering whether to extend mayoral control, some teachers and parents complain that oversight panels are mere puppets of Mayor Michael Bloomberg and that any dissent is quelled.

Those complaints might sound familiar to a student of education history. Going back to the early 20th century, scholars say, corruption and favoritism flourished under mayoral-controlled districts. "You couldn't get a job in the schools without checking with the mayor," says Professor Robert Koff, of Washington University in St. Louis. Chicago Mayor William Hale (Big Bill) Thompson, who controlled the city's schools in the 1920s, ranked among the most brazen. "Even the school custodians gave a kickback to city hall in exchange for their raises," says Jim Carl, an expert on education at Cleveland State University. Independent school boards were created as

a Progressive Era hallmark designed to curb such corruption. "But it hardly did away with patronage," Carl says.

But as urban school districts have floundered for generations, with families fleeing to the suburbs for better schools, many education experts now regard mayor-controlled districts as a way to establish accountability. And Duncan has been stumping for the idea in speeches around the country. "At the end of my tenure, if only seven mayors are in control, I think I will have failed," Duncan said this spring to a group of mayors and school superintendents.

The Chicago schools were considered virtually a lost cause when the Illinois Legislature shifted control to the mayor in 1995. Robert Bennett, the secretary of education during the Reagan administration, had labeled Chicago's the worst classrooms in the nation. "The schools were a disaster, just poison," said Paul Green, a professor at Roosevelt University. "Some of them didn't even have toilet paper."

At the time, Republicans controlled both chambers of the Illinois Legislature. "They thought they were handing Daley a dead-bang loser of an issue," Green said.

Daley, adopting a bottom-line, business-oriented approach to the schools, changed the title of the top job from superintendent to chief executive officer. He put his budget director, Vallas, in charge, and ended the practice of "social promotion." In 1997, a whopping 25 percent of eighth graders were held back. Until then, more than 90 percent of eighth graders were being passed along, even with poor grades and scores.

Backers of mayoral control point to successes in Chicago, where 64 percent of the students met or exceeded state standards on achievement tests in 2008, compared to 36 percent in 2000. Under Duncan's leadership, test scores improved overall, and the city revamped dozens of schools, typically dismissing administrators, teachers and staff in underperforming schools, and starting over from scratch.

In his fifth-floor office in city hall, Daley told NEWSWEEK that the teachers union for too long had operated as if it only had "to answer to God."

"You need competition in education," the mayor said. "When you have a monopoly, it just doesn't work."

Some 60 charters now operate in Chicago, and the long lists for admission seem to indicate their popularity with parents. But many of these schools rely heavily on idealistic young teachers expected to perform on shoestring budgets. It is a situation that can lead to burnout. Turnover at charters tends to be very high. Three charter schools in the city have recently taken steps to form unions.

In the view of union president Stewart, the Daley model of running the schools has made a scapegoat of unions. "We have some Chicago public schools that are humming along beautifully," she said. "It's unconscionable to blame the teachers' union for the problems we see in some schools."

Despite the headway Daley's first two school chiefs made, Huberman inherited serious problems; the schools are running a deficit of about $475 million, and four of the city's charter schools have been sanctioned under federal standards for poor test scores. Many students still face poverty and perhaps chaos at home and violence sometimes spills over into the classroom. So far this year, some 35 Chicago students have been slain none of them on campuses but some frighteningly near schools.

"Imagine yourself as a student trying to focus on academics, and you just lost a classmate to gunfire," says Huberman, who hopes his ties to the police department can help him create a safer learning environment.

Huberman who says he speaks often to Duncan, using him as a sounding board for ideas and, surely, for support knows he has a steep hill to climb. "There's been a lot of progress with the schools, but it's certainly not a done deal," he said. "I'm going to have to make decisions that are unpopular ? If we don't have good leadership, the schools will fail. And we must have clear standards of success. We need to hold schools accountability. I'm going to tell it like it is. I will execute."

Like Duncan, he said he supports some modifications in the No Child Left Behind law but strongly supports its underlying premise: requiring schools to meet testing standards or giving parents the option to switch to another school. "The execution and the details are sometimes problematic," he said, citing as an example tutoring provisions that hamstring school districts. He said the requirements under the law should be set by federal authorities, not by the states. He stressed that schools serving mostly poor children as in Chicago should not be given any slack. "We can't let any districts off the hook," he says, "or we're saying that some kids can't learn and all kids can learn."

Huberman visits a school nearly every day, often making surprise inspections. After his talk to the faculty at Julian, one teacher, Kelly Williamson, approached him and whispered: "We've still got a long way to go."

Article 36 **Top**

San Francisco Chronicle
No child left to move ahead
5.06.09

Matt Levinson (Op Ed)

Several years ago, when I taught Advanced Placement U.S. history, I had a student who grossly underperformed during the school year, yet somehow managed to score a 5 on the AP exam. When I asked him how he managed to accomplish this feat, he said, "I spent two weeks straight studying, reading, and reviewing, and that's all I needed."

In the same class, I had a student who read every word of the text, took copious class notes, met with me during office hours, yet only scored a 2 on the same exam. How could this happen?

Students are different, and the quicker and more honestly that teachers, schools and policymakers address this critical issue, the less likely it will be that two students in the same class in the same school will end up as far apart as my two students.

My mistake was not seeing the difference in the two students and their needs while I was teaching them. I missed the mark with both of them. Or did I? One student scored a 5, so I was a successful teacher with him. But, he produced very little work for me and for himself over the course of an academic year. The other student, who scored a 2, failed, yet he showed up each day in class, contributed to discussion, was an active learner, acquired analytical thinking and writing skills.

The indications that President Obama will continue with No Child Left Behind, and look to standardized test scores to measure school, teacher and student performance, presents misguided thinking. Looking to standardized test results misses the subtle and sometimes vast differences that exist between students and their learning styles. The one-size-fits-all approach fails to account for customized approaches to measuring student performance and bolstering low-performing schools, teachers, and students.

The premise of NCLB does nothing to address the needs of higher-end learners, like the first student described above. The everyone moves at the same pace with the same set of materials approach is fast losing currency, especially with the proliferation of online learning opportunities, and flex books, where teachers can use open source text to cobble together customized texts for individual students.

Students still need content, and they need to be held accountable for their learning. They need to know how to read, write, add, subtract, but they also need to be able to digest, in an intelligible, intellectually honest manner, the voluminous amount of information coming at them every day. Different students will demand alternative curricular approaches, like flexible instruction and modified courses of study, depending on their needs and abilities.

If testing serves the purpose of further identifying and refining the model for learning that will best serve each student, then it has a place in education. But if testing is used merely as an end to determine, however artificially, student, teacher and school performance, then President Obama will have done no more than perpetuate the flawed policies of NCLB.

Matt Levinson is the head of the middle school at the Nueva School in Hillsborough.

Article 37 **Top**

Dallas Morning News
The Education Front: How Arne Duncan should spend the stimulus money
5.06.09

William McKenzie

The Chicago Tribune recently ran an eye-catching column by James Hunt, the former Democratic governor of North Carolina, and Jeb Bush, the former GOP governor of Florida. They have their own ideas about how Education Secretary Arne Duncan should spend the $5 billion he's allocating to states from the stimulus package.

I'm not sold on the Hunt/Bush idea of using some of the money to create online campuses. Socialization is really a big part of going to school. I have qualms about kids becoming isolated through individualized learning. I'm open, though. Could someone explain to me how this wouldn't undermine the "public square" aspect of schools?

On the other hand, some of their ideas are intriguing. For example, their comments about using data in new ways to help students reflects what many, including Barack Obama, think is the new wave in education. The more schools can get real-time information, the more they can try to stave off problems.

Here's a great summary paragraph from the two ex-governors:

Data clear the fog of failure. A test score of an individual student is a snapshot. Multiply that snapshot over a class or a school or a state and a bigger picture emerges. If annual test scores can tell us whether a student is learning or losing ground, a class of test scores can tell whether a teacher is effective, and an entire state of test scores can tell whether a policy is working. When empirical data replace emotion as the basis for developing policy, America will be able to transform the quality of education into a world-class system of learning.

The stimulus money being invested in schools could end up funding "bridge to nowhere" projects. But the money's going to be spent, so putting some of it in the data revolution could make a difference.

Thoughts? Any educators out there have experience with how data's used in the classroom?

Article 38 **Top**

The Denver Post
DPS lays out its plans for federal cash
5.06.09

Jeremy P. Meyer

The $48 million means more summer classes for kids and more training for teachers.

About $48 million in federal stimulus money will flow to Denver Public Schools over the next two years, which means more summer classes for some students this year and more training for teachers.

DPS is receiving the largest share of federal stimulus money of any Colorado school district — a portion of $53 billion being funneled from Washington.

How DPS spends its stimulus money will be scrutinized and probably will be a factor in whether Colorado will get a share of the extra $5 billion in Race to the Top funds being offered to states that make the best use of stimulus money.

Superintendent Tom Boasberg said he talked with U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan about the stimulus money, trying to align Denver's spending with priorities being pushed by the White House.

"We want to position ourselves to get additional money that comes available," he said.

On Monday, Boasberg and district administrators told Denver's school board how they intend to spend the money, which is targeted for kids in poverty and kids with special needs.

The district will get $18 million each year for its Title I program for kids in poverty. Two-thirds of DPS students are eligible for federal meal benefits — a measure of poverty; 106 school programs will receive funds.

Here's how the district plans to spend the bulk of that money:

- $14.4 million will be spent over two years on classroom interventions for struggling learners, including adding sixth-grade summer academies for students entering Title 1 middle schools, credit-recovery for high school students, and instruction for teachers on how to help English- language learners.

- $5.4 million will be spent over two years on teacher training.

- $2.3 million will be spent on improving the district's data gathering and assessments, and $1.5 million will pay for improving community engagement.

The district also will receive $16 million in Title VI funds for kids with disabilities over the next two years. More than 12 percent of DPS's 75,269 students have disabilities.

Here's how the district plans to spend the bulk of that money:

- $4.5 million for programs to close the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their peers.

- $3.7 million to establish more inclusive opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in general education classrooms, particularly at the secondary level.

- $3.5 million in training for people who work with students with disabilities.

Boasberg expects the stimulus money to arrive soon and, "We are sitting down and talking to principals, refining these priorities."

Article 39 **Top**

The Post and Courier
School budget outlook a little brighter
5.06.09

Diette Courrege

The Charleston County School District's budget projections for next school year don't look nearly as dire as they did a couple of months ago.

Officials initially predicted the district would face a $28 million shortfall next school year, but that number has been reduced to $11 million.

Chief Financial Officer Mike Bobby said that figure still could change based on the final version of the state budget.

"There's a tremendous amount of fluid information," Bobby said. "It does seem like it's better, but we must proceed with great caution. We need to look at other ways to become more cost-effective. This situation is not going to get better right away."

One of the major reasons behind the drastic change in the predicted shortfall is that district officials underestimated the amount of tax revenue that would come to the district next year. The most updated county and state figures are significantly higher than what the district initially used to build next year's budget.

The projected $11 million shortfall assumes the school board would approve a tax increase for businesses, but board members have not said this year whether they would support that increase. The $11 million shortfall doesn't include the additional $3 million in stimulus money that could come to the district if Gov. Mark Sanford requests that money.

The school board has been preparing for cuts for next school year since last summer, and it already has approved two major cost-savings measures, increasing class size and closing five schools, to save about $9 million. Those reductions should cover the majority of the projected shortfall.

District officials will hold eight budget hearings across the county this month to give an overview of next year's budget and to solicit feedback on what should be their top priorities. At a budget hearing on Tuesday night at Baptist Hill High School in Hollywood, a crowd of more than 20 constituent board members, school employees and parents showed up to hear the presentation.

Many of their budget questions were about what it included for those affected by the school closings. In this rural community, Schroder Middle School will close and its students will move to the Baptist Hill High campus this fall.

Residents questioned the cost-effectiveness of that plan, whether Baptist Hill would have enough staff members to handle the additional students, what efforts were being made to add programs, such as construction and welding, to the high school, and what it would take to attract local students back to the area's schools.

Baptist Hill Principal James Winbush said many parents have lost faith in the local schools, and they think they need to go elsewhere to find what their children need.

"We're moving forward," he said. "Slowly, the people who don't believe are coming back. We're wobbling now because we're tying to stand up. We're going to have the programs we need. It's going to be up to us."

Article 40 **Top**

North Denver News
Algebra missing in action in the middle schools
5.06.09

Guerin Lee Green

Eighth grade algebra— remember it? For many kids, it was the toughest class of middle school, full of terrifying pop quizes and solving for two unknowns from a system of equations. Oooh. I still remember Ms. Greenfield, a genuine Boetcher scholar, and the queen of eighth grade algebra. But eighth grade algebra is also the pathway to college. Without it, students aren't on track for 12th grade calculus, a required (or unstated admission requirement) class for many top-flight schools, including MIT, Caltech, Claremont's Harvey Mudd, not to mention the engineering school at CU-Boulder and the Colorado School of Mines.

So why is it missing in action in most of Denver Public Schools.

It's a tale so concerning that parents across Denver, spurred on by an intrepid group at Smiley Middle School, have taken to the sine qua non of 21st century community

organizing, the on-line petition, to try to get the eighth grade math to make a comeback.

Algebra is key to not just math, but much of physical science and social sciences that demand statistical evidence. Without it, students can't be expected to master basic concepts in physics and chemistry, and anecdotally, without the early exposure to algebraic logic and reasoning, they lag behind their peers in intellectual development.

All of which may help explain DPS' distressingly poor record in college success, as a recent study.

Roxana Witter is spearheading the fight, but has thus far failed to get an audience with DPS Superintendent Tom Boasberg on the issue.

She writes, "Over the last year, I have talked to friends and family members, co-workers and acquaintances across the country. All are shocked at the fight that DPS has put up against reinstating Algebra in our school (Smiley). And everyone asks why DPS would fight this. I cannot answer them."

"In the book Radical Equations, by Robert Moses, the arguement is made that not having access to Algebra 1 in middle school is equal to not having the right to vote. As you all know, without Algebra 1 in middle school, children are behind their peers and unable to complete college prep math in high school. This leads to the ultimate consequence of fewer opportunities at the college level, and finally, less economic access and success."

"The fact that it is primarily minorities that lack access to middle school Algebra makes this a Civil Rights issue of the 21st Century. The lost opportunities suffered by those without access to middle school Algebra (again mostly minorities) include inability to compete for scholarships, inability to compete for entrance to colleges, and inability to enter many areas of study, including almost all of math, science, business, and social sciences. That means that these kids do not have the opportunity to become engineers, scientists, doctors, bankers, corporate executives, etc.

"In DPS, the effects of not having Algebra 1 in middle school is evident in all kids. High schools are seeing kids coming from "accelerated", "gifted", and "honors" programs that are not ready for college prep math classes because their Algebra skills are inadequate. Kids that have had standard DPS middle school curricula cannot even pass Algebra 1 after 9th grade. The math teachers see it, and so do the principals. The college counselors see it, and so do the college admissions offices. The longer DPS keeps their blinders on, and ignores this math crisis, the more children DPS fails. Every child that enters a DPS middle school and is not prepared for and offered Algebra 1 is a child whose opportunities have been slashed by DPS."

"Smiley was successfully teaching Algebra until this school year. The decision to remove Algebra was not data- driven, because the data shows that these kids were outperforming all of DPS in Math and they were well-prepared for college prep level math in high school," writes Witter.

"Why is DPS fighting Algebra in Smiley and other middle schools?"

Denver Public Schools Board Member Arturo JImenez is pushing the board to address the issue. "We must ensure that there is equity, and that algebra is being taught in all middle schools."

The story on middle school algebra is well-documented. "Mathematics is the language of science, and algebra is the minimum vocabulary that scientists of every discipline use to describe their work," says Dr. George Castro, Associate Dean of the College of Science at San Jose State University.

A 1997 federal Department of Education report made the research clear: "Students who plan to take advanced mathematics and science courses during high school, and begin to study algebra during middle school, are at a clear advantage. A rigorous sequence of mathematics spans several years. The traditional sequence of mathematics courses involves one year courses in algebra I, geometry, and algebra II, followed by a half-year course in trigonometry, a full- or half-year course in pre-calculus, and then calculus or an Advanced Placement course. ... Approximately 60 percent of the students who took calculus in high school had taken algebra in the 8th grade. The typical high school sequence of rigorous science courses (biology, chemistry, and physics) also necessitates an early background in algebra and geometry. Students who do not take courses covering algebraic concepts early in their educational career risk closing the door on many important opportunities, including opportunities to take courses outside of mathematics and science. "

Witter continues: "Currently, DPS uses the Connected Math Program (CMP), and does not teach traditional algebra. Unfortunately, the research does not support that kids complete Algebra 1 with CMP, although CMP teaches algebra concepts. Programs outside of Denver which use CMP also offer accelerated middle school programs combining three years of CMP into two, plus a full year of Algebra 1. In Denver, many middle schools are trying to teach Algebra "under the table" but even students that have passed the "district Algebra test" are recommended to repeat Algebra in high school because they are not adequately prepared.

Furthermore, Algebra offerings in DPS, even as limited as they are now, seem to fall on racial lines ...children of color are less likely to have algebra options. Only programs such as Hill Middle School Honors Program have been told they can teach Algebra outright, to their honors students. Until this year, Smiley Middle School Honors/IP offered traditional algebra in 8th grade with remarkable results. These students CSAP math scores averaged well above other schools and the district as a whole. Despite these results, the district has mandated the removal of Algebra at Smiley and sole teaching of CMP.

www.petitiononline.com/smsalg1/petition.html for the online petition

http://www.petitiononline.com/smsalg1/petition.html

San Francisco Chronicle
School districts find out their cut of stimulus
5.06.09

Nanette Asimov

California school districts are about to get their first hard cash from the federal stimulus package, their share of the nearly $1.2 billion in extra funding the state has so far received for educating low-income children and students with disabilities.

The money is on top of what the federal government regularly pays out for these purposes.

Oakland Unified is the Bay Area's big winner, with nearly $15 million in extra funding for low-income students and nearly $10 million for special education coming its way later this month.

San Francisco Unified comes in second, with close to $9 million in extra funds for low-income children, and about $13 million more for special education.

Charters - autonomous public schools - are also getting checks. Garfield Elementary Charter in San Mateo County will get about $179,000, walking away with the biggest check for a Bay Area charter.

The irony is that even that money is too little and too late for Garfield, where 90 percent of children are poor. Its board of directors decided months ago that the school can no longer afford to operate on its own, and it will rejoin the Redwood City Elementary School District next fall.

"The money will still be spent to help students at the school, so that's a positive," said Alex Hunt, Garfield's executive director. No decisions have been made, but Hunt said some of the money would probably fund a teacher who has been helping lagging students get back to grade level in reading.

The cash is the first of two federal stimulus payments that districts will receive this year for low-income and disabled students. The second is expected in the fall, another $1.2 billion.

Although school officials welcomed the money, most said the temporary payouts would barely cushion the blow of budgetary problems brought on by the recession and the state's financial troubles.

"I'm always happy to get a little extra money, but we want to make sure people understand that this is not continuous," said Alice Spearman, Oakland's school board president.

That means it's more likely to be spent on one-time training than on salaries. Oakland has warned 300 teachers they might lose their jobs next fall.

Like most districts, Oakland also dips deeply into its general fund budget to pay for mandated services for students with disabilities. Spearman estimated that the $9.5 million in additional special education funds would barely be enough to restore the money taken from the general fund for special education.

"We have quite a number of (special education) students who are in private schools because we don't provide the services they need," Spearman said. Oakland must pay those private schools for their services.

In San Francisco, where schools are trying to close a budget gap of about $5 million, officials expect to use their cash to start new programs and train teachers, said policy director Nancy Waymack.

"It's certainly a welcome addition," she said.

Hayward, which has trimmed 10 percent of its $180 million budget this year, was disappointed to learn it would get $3.4 million rather than the $5.1 million it expected.

Still, the money will probably be used to keep elementary classes small for one more year, said Assistant Superintendent Barry Schimmel.

Top 10 cash awards

Specifically for educating low-income children:
Oakland Unified: ***$14.7 million***
San Francisco Unified: ***$8.8 million***
West Contra Costa Unified: ***$5.8 million***
Mount Diablo Unified: ***$3.7 million***
San Jose Unified: ***$3.7 million***
Hayward Unified: ***$3.4 million***
East Side Union High School District (San Jose): ***$2.4 million***
Antioch Unified: ***$2.2 million***
Vallejo Unified: ***$2.1 million***
Fairfield-Suisun: ***$1.9 million***

Chronicle staff writer Jill Tucker contributed to this report.

Article 42 **Top**

Education Week
Obama budget proposes increase for education
5.08.09

Alyson Klein

President Barack Obama's first budget proposal would boost U.S. Department of Education spending by 2.8 percent and provide substantial resources to turn around low-performing schools, reward effective teachers, and bolster early-childhood programs.

But—not counting massive one-time increases in the recent economic-stimulus legislation—the plan also provides no more than level-funding for special education and, arguably, a cut to grants for districts under the Title I program for disadvantaged students.

The budget would also seek to eliminate 12 programs the White House deems ineffective, including the $66 million Even Start Family Literacy program.

The president's fiscal 2010 budget proposal, released this week, would provide $46.7 billion to the Education Department, an increase of $1.3 billion over fiscal 2009.

The figure is separate from some $100 billion for education approved as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and does not include a proposed change in the Pell Grant program for college students that would shift it from the discretionary to the mandatory side of the ledger.

Title I grants to districts are slated to get $12.99 billion under the proposal, compared with $14.49 billion in the current fiscal year, or a decrease of 10.4 percent. But that amount doesn't include $10 billion in one-time funding under the stimulus package for Title I grants to districts.

Some of the money would be redirected to the Title I School Improvement grant program, which provides grants to states to help turn around schools that are struggling to meet student-achievement goals set by the 7-year-old No Child Left Behind Act. The school improvement program would nearly triple from $545 million this year to $1.5 billion in fiscal 2010, which begins Oct. 1. And that doesn't include a $3 billion one-time infusion approved as part of the stimulus package.

The proposed shift in funds has advocates for school districts worried about the potential long-term impact on local coffers.

"The dollar amounts that districts build [their budgets] off of has been cut in the president's budget," said Mary Kusler, the assistant director of advocacy and policy for the American Association of School Administrators, based in Arlington, Va.

She said districts might have to consider using stimulus money to cover shortfalls in Title I, "lessening the potential impact of [the stimulus]."

But U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan described the change as a redirection of resources to the schools most in need.

"We're really trying to focus with a laser-like focus on the lowest-performing schools around the country," Mr. Duncan told reporters in a May 7 conference call. Under the Obama proposal, 40 percent of the Title I school improvement funds would have to go middle and high schools.

Funding Performance Pay

The budget proposal also seeks a significant increase for the Teacher Incentive Fund, which awards grants to school districts to develop performance-pay programs. The budget would hike TIF spending to $517.3 million in fiscal 2010, up from $97.3 million in the current year. The increase would include $30 million for a national teacher-recruitment campaign. That would be on top of a $200 million one-time increase in the stimulus measure.

Under the proposal, the TIF money could be used to reward school employees other than teachers, such as custodians and cafeteria workers.

President Obama has promoted alternative pay plans for teachers, both on the 2008 campaign trail and in his first prominent speech on education since taking office, delivered in March. But the budget proposal is a sign that the administration is

willing to put money behind the rhetoric, said John Bailey, who served as an adviser on education to President George W. Bush.

Marc Egan, a federal lobbyist for the 3.2 million-member National Education Association, said that instead of the bigger increase for TIF, the union would prefer to see an increase for the Improving Teacher Quality State grants, which would receive level funding.

Some advocates for education redesign question whether the funding increases for TIF and the school improvement grants would improve student outcomes.

Charles Barone, the director of federal policy for Democrats for Education Reform, a New York City-based political action committee, said he doesn't think states and districts have a good record on using money for incentive pay and school improvement.

"We would have gotten just as much change on school improvement under the stimulus if we had dropped 30 million $100 bills over the 50 states and said, 'Do good things,' " he said.

New Initiatives

President Obama's budget proposal makes room for a few new programs, including a $50 million initiative aimed at testing strategies for curbing the dropout rate.

Mr. Obama also is seeking $500 million in federal matching funds that would encourage states and districts to devote a larger share of their Title I money to prekindergarten programs. And he has asked for $300 million to help states better integrate early-childhood programs.

The president's plan proposes level funding for the state grants that help cover the cost of special education. He has asked for $11.5 billion for the program in 2010, the same level appropriated in the current fiscal year. That doesn't include the $11.3 billion provided under the stimulus measure, which was enacted in February.

The Institute of Education Sciences would a big winner, however. Its budget would increase to $689 million in fiscal 2010, a 11.7 percent hike. Much of that increase would be directed to research, development, and dissemination.

The Obama budget calls for eliminating 12 programs, for a total of $550.7 million in savings. They include the $66 million Even Start Family Literacy program, which helps integrate early-childhood education, adult education, and parenting education programs. National evaluations haven't shown that the program is effective, according to White House Office of Management and Budget documents.