

The NEGP WEEKLY

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A Weekly News Update on America's Education Goals and school improvement efforts across America from the National Education Goals Panel

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STATE POLICY NEWS

ALASKA: POSTPONING ITS HIGH-STAKES EXAM (Goal Three: Student Achievement)

The Alaska state board of education last month unanimously passed a resolution recommending to postpone until 2006 the use of a high-stakes high school graduation exam, reports EDUCATION WEEK (Bushweller, 1/10). Bruce Johnson, deputy commissioner of the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, explained that the state wants to continue testing students, but without the high-stakes requirement.

EDUCATION WEEK notes that a debate is likely to ensue in the legislature, since some lawmakers oppose any delay.

For more information, visit the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development at <http://www.ed.state.ak.us/home.html>

NEW JERSEY STATE STANDARDS: ACHIEVE'S REPORT (Goal Three: Student Achievement)

Achieve, a non-profit organization, reviewed New Jersey's language arts and math standards. The group found that while the state's assessments are "among the best we have reviewed, the standards in both language arts and literacy and mathematics need improvement."

FACT OF THE WEEK

Between 1992 and 1996, 39 states (out of 51) significantly increased the percentages of high school graduates who immediately enrolled in 2-year or 4-year colleges in any state.

The NEGP WEEKLY is a publication of:
The National Education Goals Panel
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Washington, DC 20037;
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What is the National Education Goals Panel?

The National Education Goals Panel is a unique bipartisan body of state and federal officials created in 1990 by President Bush and the nation's Governors to report state and national progress and urge education improvement efforts to reach a set of National Education Goals.

Who serves on the National Education Goals Panel and how are they chosen?

Eight governors, four state legislators, four members of the U.S. Congress, and two members appointed by the President serve on the Goals Panel. Members are appointed by the leadership of the National Governors' Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the U.S. Senate and House, and the President.

What does the Goals Panel do?

The Goals Panel has been charged to:

- Report state and national progress toward the National Education Goals.
- Work to establish a system of high academic standards and assessments.
- Identify promising and effective reform strategies.
- Recommend actions for state, federal and local governments to take.
- Build a nationwide, bipartisan consensus to achieve the Goals.

The annual Goals Report and other publications of the Panel are available without charge upon request from the Goals Panel or at its web site www.negp.gov. Publications requests can be made by mail, fax, e-mail, or on-line.

The group examined the state's Core Curriculum Content standards and its assessments at grades 4, 8 and 11. Achieve conducts reviews of state standards and assessment through its Benchmarking Initiative, which works with state leaders to evaluate standards and testing and advises policymakers and school leaders on ways they can improve their systems of assessment.

For more information on the New Jersey report and other state evaluations, visit Achieve at <http://www.achieve.org>.

COMMUNITY AND LOCAL NEWS

MAYOR IN CHARGE: HARRISBURG'S CITY HALL RUNS SCHOOLS (All Goals)

Mayor Stephen Reed of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, gained authority for running the city public school system. The state-authorized takeover was cleared by a December 15 state court ruling, reports EDUCATION WEEK (Sandham, 1/10). A court battle over who should be in charge of the city schools has been underway since the summer.

According to the paper, the legislature 'broadened the scope of the law [in November], opening up the possibility that other low-performing districts meeting certain criteria could be targeted for takeover as well.

For more information, including Harrisburg's Improvement Plan for 2000-2003, visit the school district's web site at: <http://www.hbgasd.k12.pa.us>

TEACHER SHORTAGES: HITS MINNESOTA (Goal Four: Teacher Education and Professional Development)

The Minneapolis STAR TRIBUNE reports on the state's growing teacher shortage (Lonetree, 1/12). A poll of school superintendents across the state by Education Minnesota, the state's teachers union, found that the shortage is "widespread and appears to be worsening."

According to the paper, the shortage, particularly in the

The National Education Goals Panel

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areas of math, science and special education, was the catalyst for increases in teacher contract settlements last year. School-funding increases, including teacher salaries, are on the legislative agenda again this year. The teachers union also is pursuing legislation to fund mentorship programs for the first three years of a teacher's tenure.

Education Commissioner Christine Jax has proposed a plan to speed up teacher training for mid-career professionals who would like to teach. Education Minnesota leaders have opposed her plan, arguing that teacher turnover is even higher among "unqualified" teachers, reports the paper.

For more information on Minnesota education, visit <http://www.educ.state.mn.us/>.

FEDERAL POLICY NEWS

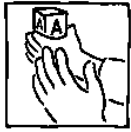
PARTY UNITY: DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS AGREE ON FEDERAL ROLE IN EDUCATION (All Goals)

The CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR reports on a "truce" in the battle between Democrats and Republicans over the role of the federal government in education (Chaddock, 1/12) The paper editorializes that both parties share the view that the federal government's overriding issue in public education is quality. "The next Education secretary takes over a department that has won back its right to exist," pens the paper.

The article also points out that the recent presidential election found both candidates rallying for standards-based reform and urging more federal dollars to be targeted to improving student achievement. And, both teachers unions - who campaigned against Bush - "are already expressing an interest in a Bush reading initiative, likely to be his first legislation."

For more information, visit the CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR at <http://www.csmonitor.com>, January 12, 2001.

THE NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS



Goal 1: Ready to Learn



Goal 2: School Completion



Goal 3: Student Achievement and Citizenship



Goal 4: Teacher Education and Professional Development



Goal 5: Mathematics and Science



Goal 6: Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning



Goal 7: Safe, Disciplined and Alcohol- and Drug-free Schools



Goal 8: Parental Participation

HIGH-STAKES TESTS: NEW GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

(Goal Three: Student Achievement)

The Department of Education's office for civil rights recently released a resource guide for educators on the use of tests as part of high-stakes decision-making for students. Chapter One of the guide provides information about professionally recognized test measurement principles. Chapter Two discusses the legal frameworks that have guided federal courts and the office of civil rights when addressing the use of tests that have high-stakes consequences for students.

The guide does not establish new legal or test measurement principles, according to the introduction.

For more information, visit the Department of Education's web site at <http://www.ed.gov/ocr/testing/introduction.html>

RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

INTERNET-BASED SCHOOL: BACK-TO-BASICS WITH BENNETT

(All Goals)

Simply called K-12, former U.S. Education Secretary William Bennett late last year launched his back-to-basics internet-based school. The school is expected to open next fall and will cost students from \$1,000 to \$5,000 a year.

Home-schooled students constitute the largest group of students signing up for K-12, but Bennett also has forged partnerships with virtual charter schools in California, Alaska and one is pending in Pennsylvania.

For more information, visit K-12's web site at <http://www.k12.com>.

REINVENTING EDUCATION: AN IBM PROGRAM

(Goal Three: Student Achievement and Goal Eight: Parent Involvement)

EDUCATION WEEK reports on IBM Corporation's "Reinventing Education" program. The program, launched in 1994, offers school districts and states a partner to help

boost schools' technological capacity and introduce other education reform initiatives with the goal of improving student reading skills, teacher-parent communication and management of school information.

An independent study of the IBM initiative conducted by the Center for Children and Technology found the program to be a success. "What had to be in place at the senior level was a real commitment to a real school reform plan," said Bob Spielvogel, a senior scientist at the New-York-based Center for Children and Technology.

For more information, visit IBM's "Reinventing Education" program at <http://www.ibm.com/ibm/ibmgives/grant/education/programs/reinventing>

FEATURE STORY

QUALITY COUNTS: AN EDUCATION WEEK REPORT (All Goals)

EDUCATION WEEK's Quality Counts 2001 addresses the "enormous energy" states have invested over the past decade to raise academic standards in schools across the country. The report found that the effort is beginning to pay off in schools. Students are posting higher test scores in some states, many teachers report the expectations in their schools are on the upswing and the curriculum in many schools is beginning to change to reflect the new standards.

However, Quality Counts 2001 also found that in many states, tests are "overshadowing the standards they were designed to measure and could be encouraging undesirable practices in schools." Problems detected include a lack of alignment between standards and the tests and a rush by states to hold students and schools accountable without providing the "essential support."

Quality Counts 2001 is based on a new survey of 1,019 public school teachers. According to EDUCATION WEEK, the report also is based on "the most comprehensive survey to date of what the 50 states are doing to set academic standards, create testing and accountability systems linked to those standards, and provide support for students and educators to reach the higher expectations."

Findings from the report include:

- > Almost eight in 10 teachers said the curriculum was "somewhat" or "a lot" more demanding of students.
 - > More than six in 10 said the expectations for what students would learn were "somewhat" or "a lot" higher.
 - > Nearly seven in 10 said teachers in their schools were collaborating more.
 - > More than six in 10 said students were writing more, nearly half reported students were reading more.
 - > Of those who said the curriculum was more demanding, more than six in 10 attributed the change to statewide academic standards. Slightly more than half said their students
-

were working harder because of them.

The report also found that:

- > Nearly seven in 10 teachers said instruction stresses state tests “far” or “somewhat” too much.
- > Sixty-six percent said state tests were forcing them to concentrate too much on what’s tested to the detriment of other important topics.
- > Nearly half reported spending “a great deal” of time preparing their students in test-taking skills.

Quality Counts 2001 also found that forty states have tests aligned with their standards in English at the elementary, middle and high school levels, while 34 report alignment in math. Yet the report includes a detailed analyses by Achieve, a Cambridge, Massachusetts-based non-profit, that found the match between state standards and tests are not close enough.

Besides a thorough analysis of this year’s theme - standards-related policies - this years Quality Counts report also grades the states in four areas: standards and accountability, efforts to improve teacher quality, school climate and resources. The report includes a State of the States section, which reports on more than 75 indicators of the health of each state’s public education system.

For more information and a copy of the report Quality Counts 2001, visit EDUCATION WEEK at <http://www.edweek.com>.

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