

The NEGP WEEKLY

June 1, 2001

Volume 2 — No. 103



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

CONTENTS:

STATE POLICY NEWS.....Page 1

**COMMUNITY AND
LOCAL NEWS.....Page 2**

**FEDERAL POLICY
NEWS.....Page 3**

**RESEARCH AND
EDUCATION PRACTICE...Page 4**

FEATURE STORY.....Page 5

STATE POLICY NEWS

STANDARDS OF LEARNING: VIRGINIANS WEIGH IN (Goal Three: Student Achievement)

A slight majority of Virginians (52 percent) say the state's Standards of Learning (SOL) have improved student learning, according to a new poll released by the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute of Virginia Commonwealth University (Borja, Richmond TIMES-DISPATCH, 5/22). Of the 52 percent, 16 percent say the program helps "a lot," while 36 percent say the SOL help "a little". Almost one-third (31 percent) responded that the program has helped "not at all"

The survey also found the public to be divided over whether the SOL tests accurately measure student achievement: 44 percent of those surveyed say they are very or somewhat confident in the tests as a good measure; 46 percent say they have reservations or no confidence in the tests.

"The results are mildly positive," said Cary Funk, director of the Commonwealth Poll. "That's surprising given all the political heat on the SOLs, all the political debate back and forth."

For more information, visit the Virginia Commonwealth University at www.vcu.edu and search for the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute.

The NEGP WEEKLY is a publication of:
The National Education Goals Panel
1255 22nd Street NW, Suite 502
Washington, DC 20037;
202-724-0015

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.

SINGLE-SEX SCHOOLS: PROMOTES STEREOTYPES IN CALIFORNIA

(Goal Three: Student Achievement)

Researchers were surprised to find that California's experiment with single-sex schools actually promoted gender stereotypes (Mecoy, Sacramento BEE, 5/23). Under a program established in 1997, six single-sex academies were created in the state, designed to give at-risk students "a chance to excel without the pressure of having the opposite sex in the classroom," writes the paper.

A two-year study, funded by the Ford and Spencer foundations and conducted by researchers at the University of Toronto, UC San Diego and UC Berkeley, found reduced distractions and "enhanced candid conversations." However, discipline, instructional methods and the "messages delivered by teachers reinforced sexual stereotypes," reports the paper.

The Legislature has eliminated funding for the academies, and only one remains open.

For more information on public education in California, visit the California State Board of Education at www.cde.ca.gov/board/

COMMUNITY AND LOCAL NEWS

CUT ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF: HIRE TEACHERS

(Goal Three: Student Achievement and Four: Teacher Education and Professional Development)

In an attempt to hire hundreds of new teachers in the fall, the Chicago Public Schools system is planning to eliminate 16 percent of its central office staff by the end of the school year (Quintanilla and Martinez, Chicago TRIBUNE, 5/22). The paper writes that Mayor Richard Daley's "admonition" to school CEO Paul Vallas and Board of Education President Gery Chico was the impetus for the plan to cut and reorganize central office staff.

According to the TRIBUNE, the first cut of 400 administrative jobs is expected to raise \$22 million to hire 500 new teachers.

The National Education Goals Panel

GOVERNORS

Frank O' Bannon
Indiana, Chair, 2000

Jim Geringer
Wyoming, Chair-elect, 2001

John Engler
Michigan

Jim Hodges
South Carolina

Frank Keating
Oklahoma

Paul E. Patton
Kentucky

Jeanne Shaheen
New Hampshire

Tom Vilsack
Iowa

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION

Vacant

Vacant

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman
New Mexico

U.S. Senator Jim Jeffords
Vermont

U.S. Representative George Miller
California

Vacant

STATE LEGISLATORS

Representative G. Spencer Coggs
Wisconsin

Representative Mary Lou Cowlshaw
Illinois

Representative Douglas R. Jones
Idaho

Senator Stephen Stoll
Missouri

For more information, visit the Chicago Public schools at www.cps.k12.il.us.

ARIZONA'S ZERO TOLERANCE: IS IT FAIR?

(Goal Seven: Safe Schools)

A new state law in Arizona that allows prosecutors to file felony school interference charges against students who make threats is being questioned, reports the Arizona REPUBLIC (Villa, 5/19). The paper conducted a study on the effectiveness of the law, and found it comes up short.

According to the paper's study, almost half of the referrals were dropped because the threats turned out to be innocuous. The majority of the remaining cases ended up with a lowering of the charges - from felony to lesser misdemeanor charges. Prosecutors counter that it's routine for many cases to be dropped.

For more information on the Arizona REPUBLIC'S study, visit the paper at www.azcentral.com/news/education/0519THREATS19.html.

FEDERAL POLICY NEWS

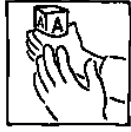
INELIGIBLE FOR AID: COLLEGE STUDENTS CONVICTED OF DRUG-RELATED OFFENSES

(Goal Seven: Safe Schools)

A federal law, on the books since 1998 but never implemented until now, mandates that current and future college students who are convicted of drug-related offenses and admit to it are ineligible for federal tuition aid for at least one year (Wagman, Philadelphia INQUIRER, 5/21). Repeat offenders would be permanently ineligible. In order to have their eligibility reinstated students must participate in a federally approved drug-rehabilitation program.

"It's a bad law," said Rachel Lohman, chairwoman of financial aid at Wilkes University in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, and chairwoman of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. "We should not be using the financial-aid system to enforce social behaviors. The law was passed as an amendment to the Higher

THE NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS



Goal 1: Ready to Learn



Goal 2: School Completion



Goal 3: Student Achievement and Citizenship



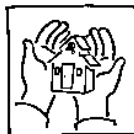
Goal 4: Teacher Education and Professional Development



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

Education Act, and the drug question first appeared on federal-aid forms in the 2000-2001 school year.

For more information, visit the Philadelphia INQUIRER at http://inq.philly.com/content/inquirer/2001/05/02/front_.../JDRUGS21.htm?template+aprint.html, or www.inq.philly.com and search for the 5/21 story written by Jake Wagman.

CENSUS REPORTS: FEWER MARRIED WITH CHILDREN

(All Goals)

The 2000 U.S. Census report marks a slight decline from 1990 the number of households comprised of married couples with children. Fewer than one-fourth of U.S. households are made up of married couples with children under age 18. Campbell Gibson, a senior analyst at the Census Bureau, said the data shows trends that have persisted since at least 1960.

EDUCATION WEEK writes that the new data is likely to “revive questions about whether the nation’s schools have the right blend of programs to serve students from homes that are not in the traditional two-parent mold.” (Trotter, 5/23)

For more information, visit the Census Bureau at www.census.gov or read the EDUCATION WEEK article at www.edweek.com/ew/ew_printstory.cfm?slug=37census.html.

RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

ON-LINE TEST PREPARATION: GROWING ON THE WEB

(Goal Three: Student Achievement)

Online test preparation is a fast-growing business, spurred in part by President Bush’s call for expanded student testing, according to the N.Y. TIMES (Morris, 5/24). Sites like www.Homeroom.com, owned by the Princeton Review, allow students to practice test-taking skills by taking practice exams in the classroom.

According to the paper, schools that do not use online tests depend on teachers to prepare students by stopping the regular curriculum “for weeks” to practice test-taking.

While teachers told the paper the online test tools are “invaluable,” the paper reports that “even the companies that sell them note that actual improvement in test scores has been shown to be incremental.”

Skeptics remain. “Given 20 choices of what students could be doing with these new tools, is practicing test items something which should be high on the list,” queried Jamie McKenzie, a former school superintendent from Bellingham, Washington, now a consultant on educational technology issues.

For more information on online test preparation, visit www.homeroom.com.

GOOD AND BAD SCHOOLS: IDENTIFICATION WEAK (Goal Three: Student Achievement)

A new Rand report found that while more than half of the states reward or penalize schools based primarily on test scores, methods used to identify good and bad schools are less reliable than many state leaders may think (Olson, EDUCATION WEEK, 5/23). “The question is, are we picking out lucky schools or good schools, and unlucky schools or bad schools?” asked David Grissmer, senior management scientist at Rand. “The answer is, we’re picking out lucky and unlucky schools.”

Researchers found that between 50 percent and 80 percent of the improvement in a school’s average test scores from one year to the next was temporary and caused by fluctuations that had nothing to do with long-term changes in learning or productivity.

The study will be published next year.

For more information, visit RAND at www.rand.org.

FEATURE STORY

“WRITTEN OFF”: AN EXAMINATION OF TEXAS’ HISPANIC DROPOUT PROBLEM (Goal Two: School Completion)

A complex series of factors lead to Texas’ disproportionate Hispanic dropout rate, reports the DALLAS MORNING NEWS in a series on the state’s Hispanic dropout problem (5/22). The paper is running a five-part series examining reasons why Hispanic students drop out at higher rates and which programs effectively keep Hispanics in school to earn a diploma.

Part 3 of the series assesses the severity of the dropout problem and discusses the factors leading to the high dropout rates. Nationally, Hispanics drop out of schools 2.5 times as

often as blacks and 3.5 times as often as whites. In Texas, 54 percent of Hispanics over age 25 have a high school diploma.

According to the paper, the “statistics take on an added importance for Texas because of the state’s changing demographics.” The Hispanic population, which already comprises 40 percent of the state’s public school population, is expected to more than double over the next 30 years. “The economy we have now can no longer absorb large numbers of dropouts,” said Maria Robledo Montecel, executive director of the Intercultural Development Research Association, a San Antonio-based group that advocates for improved education experiences for disadvantaged and minority students.

Montecel points out that today’s dropout rates are significantly better than the 80 percent or 90 percent who dropped out in the 1940s and 1950s, but today’s 57 percent Hispanic high school completion rate remains far behind that of whites (88.4 percent) or blacks (78.9 percent).

Dr. Rober Hauser, a professor at the University of Wisconsin, uses census data to promote his view that the reason the Hispanic dropout rate is high is that Hispanic children are more likely to live in high-risk situations than are white or black children.

Other researchers point to several factors particular to the Hispanic community that may explain why dropout rates are so high: strong family bonds in many Hispanic households might make teenagers consider their responsibility to earn money a higher duty than finishing school, for example.

The paper describes the efforts of one district, the Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD, where Hispanic enrollment has jumped 76 percent since 1994. Nothing is new or radical. The district offers English classes to Hispanic parents, hires Spanish-speaking liaisons and follows up with Hispanic students who are at risk for dropping out.

In Dallas, many GED programs target Hispanic students. The national Aspira Association promotes its program called Apex that is built around holding workshops in churches, community centers and homes of Hispanic families around the country. Topics presented include how to “navigate the education system and the importance of education,” writes the paper.

For more information on this series in the DALLAS MORNING NEWS, visit the paper at www.dallasnews.com/dropouts/part3/stories/index.html.

The NEGP WEEKLY is a publication of:
The National Education Goals Panel
1255 22nd Street NW, Suite 502
Washington, DC 20037;
202-724-0015

NEGP Acting Executive Director: John Barth
Publisher: John Barth
Editor: Barbara A. Pape
www.negp.gov

The NEGP/ Daily Report Card (DRC)
hereby authorizes further reproduction and
distribution with proper acknowledgment.