

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

Teacher Testing: Illinois' New, More Rigorous Exam

(Goal Four: Teacher Education & Professional Development)

Illinois teachers can expect to face a more challenging teacher exam, a requirement to become a fully certified teacher in the state (Grossman, Chicago SUN-TIMES, 9/16). The new test, which covers math, reading, writing and grammar, is rated by teachers and others who have taken the test to be at a 10th-grade to college level.

The prior test, a version of the Basic Skills test, was deemed so easy "that an eighth- or ninth-grade student should have been able to pass it, [although] many teachers still stumbled on its questions," writes the paper.

According to the paper, some educators worry that the tougher test could keep more people out of the profession, particularly troublesome during a teacher shortage. However, some educators argue that the test should remain demanding. "I think maybe it should even be a bit more challenging," said Josh McFerrin, a recent graduate of the University of Illinois at Chicago, who plans to become a high school history teacher. "I'm teaching high schoolers, and I think our level should be a bit higher than theirs."

For more information, visit the state of Illinois at <http://www.state.il.us/state/educate>

The NEGP WEEKLY is a publication of:
The National Education Goals Panel
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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 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.

Character Education: South Dakota Program A Success

(Goal Seven: Safe & Drug-Free Schools)

A statewide character education program has helped South Dakota students to be less likely to be violent, break the law, cheat in school, and get in trouble than they were before they participated in the program (Rubin, EDUCATION DAILY, 8/10).

Researchers at the South Dakota State University Cooperative Extension Service's 4-H department conducted the survey of about 6,000 to 8,000 students a year from the 1997-1998 to the 1999-2000 school year. The purpose was to "gauge the effectiveness of the Character Counts! Curriculum in schools statewide," reports the paper.

For more information, visit Character Counts at <http://www.charactercounts.org>.

COMMUNITY AND LOCAL NEWS

Reading Results: Improved For Full-Day Kindergartners

(Goal One: Ready To Learn & Goal Three: Student Achievement)

Montgomery County, Maryland's, full-day kindergarten program appears to have helped students improve reading skills, according to a new, year-long study issued by the county's school district (Gowen, WASHINGTON POST, 9/11). The study of nearly 8,000 kindergartners found that 71 percent of "high-risk" students who spent all day in school "mastered reading fundamentals by the end of the year, as opposed to 54 percent of those enrolled half day."

School Superintendent Jerry Weast praised several of his reforms designed to close the achievement gap between affluent and poverty-stricken students. Besides the all-day kindergarten program, Weast singled out an emphasis on smaller classes in the earliest grades, a more academic curriculum and "extensive" kindergarten

The National Education Goals Panel

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U.S. Representative George Miller of California

State Representative G. Spencer Coggs of Wisconsin

State Representative Mary Lou Cowlshaw of Illinois

State Representative Douglas R. Jones of Idaho

State Senator Stephen Stoll of Missouri

teacher training.”

For more information, visit the Montgomery County Public School System at <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us>.

In The Middle: Baltimore's Middle School Reform Stuck In Mud

(Goal Three: Student Achievement)

Although Baltimore school leaders have planned to reform two low-performing middle schools this year, the new programs are not yet in place, reports the BALTIMORE SUN (Niedowski, 9/11). Both Hamilton and Highlandtown middle schools are scheduled to put in place a reform model developed by Johns Hopkins University that “provides teacher coaches, professional development and a focus on improved school climate,” writes the paper. But the district only recently contacted the university’s Talent Development Middle School program.

Cassandra Jones, chief academic officer for the city school district said despite the delay, “Talent Development is going to happen.” The program is operational at 20 sites in five states.

For more information, visit the Baltimore public school district at <http://www.bcps.k12.md.us>.

FEDERAL POLICY NEWS

School District And Terrorism: Grants Awarded

(Goal Seven: Safe & Drug-Free Schools)

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige last week announced that the U.S. Department of Education would be making a series of grants totaling in the millions of dollars to the school districts directly impacted by the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

THE NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS



Goal 1: Ready to Learn



Goal 2: School Completion



Goal 3: Student Achievement and Citizenship



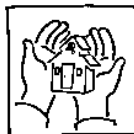
Goal 4: Teacher Education and Professional Development



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

Paige also announced that the department would provide information resources to parents and teachers to help children dealing with the effects of the attacks, but who were not directly impacted.

The grants will come from Project SERV, a Congressionally approved program intended to provide assistance such as counseling services to local school districts that have experienced a traumatic event.

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

Comments Wanted: Draft 2004 Mathematics Framework For NAEP

(Goal Five: Math And Science & Goal Eight: Parent Involvement)

The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) has scheduled a National Public Forum on September 24, 2001 in Washington, D.C. to receive comments on the draft 2004 Mathematics Framework for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Individuals or groups involved in education policy, math, assessment or business, as well as the general public, are invited to offer input.

For more information about presenting oral or written remarks and to read the draft framework, visit NAEP at <http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/html>. Look for the third item under the New & Noteworthy section on the bottom right.

For more information on the current framework, see the Mathematics Framework for the 1996 and 2000 NAEP at <http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/mathematics/whatmeasure.asp/html>.

RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

Adopt-A-Classroom: Financial Resource For Teachers (All Goals)

Three years ago, lawyer Jamie Rosenberg left his law firm to launch a new program designed to bring more resources into classrooms (Bell, ORLANDO SENTINEL, 9/16). His program, Adopt-A-Classroom, patterned after the Adopt-A-Highway program, calls on donors to contribute \$500 a year for a specific classroom.

Since then the program has grown enough to support 350 classrooms and has garnered endorsements from school superintendents, mayors and representatives from Congress. Donors primarily come from Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach Counties, with a few in New York. Donors come from major sponsors, small business and individuals.

Rosenberg is prepared to handle a “rush” of donors. “Right now, we have every school in the country downloaded in our database,” he said. “We’re making it as easy to adopt a classroom as it is to buy a book on Amazon.com.”

For more information, visit Adopt-A-Classroom at <http://www.adoptaclassroom.com>.

TO THE ARTS: CALIFORNIA’S RESURGENCE

Although arts programs were “pummeled” by California’s Proposition 13, they are making a comeback throughout the state, reports the L.A. TIMES (Beyette, 9/9). The paper notes several changes:

- In January, the State Board of Education adopted new standards for what students need to know to demonstrate literacy in dance, music, theater and the visual arts.
- Admissions requirements at the state’s public universities are being amended to require more arts instruction in high school.
- In February, the state PTA launched “SMARTS: Bring Back the Arts,” and awareness and advocacy campaign targeted at legislators, school boards, media and parents with a goal of seeing that every public school student gets quality arts education from pre-K to grade 12.
- A 10-year Arts Education Plan was adopted by the Los Angeles Unified School District

For more information, visit the L.A. TIMES at <http://www.latimes.com/features/lifestyle/la-000072741sep09.story>.

FEATURE STORY

A National Tragedy: Schools Respond

Last week's tragic attack on American soil left Americans reeling and forced schools into the position of dealing with frightened and shocked children. Ronald Stephens, executive director of the National School Safety Center in Westlake Village, California, said the nation's schools are "better prepared to manage crisis situations than they were 20 years ago," reports EDUCATION WEEK (Reid and Geirwertz, 9/19). The newspaper published an article detailing ways different schools responded to the crisis and included a list of resources for teachers and administrators who continue to grapple with helping children adjust.

Schools in Washington, D.C. and the Maryland and Virginia suburbs "had teams of crisis counselors on standby," writes the paper. Although many schools in New York, the Washington area and Los Angeles and San Francisco closed early and remained closed the following day, many national school security experts "advised school leaders to preserve as much of the normal routine as possible – a stabilizing signal to children – and to trust their instincts," according to ED WEEK.

However, "if you find that the community is in such a state that they need their children home with them, then you need to close the school and children should go home," suggested Sally Cole, principal of Emerson Secondary School in Oklahoma City, who cautioned that educators must gauge the "emotional temperature" of their own community.

Stephens thinks school districts nationwide will tighten security, "but cautioned that each community must determine what action to take to make campuses safer without turning them into "armed camps."

He also predicted that bomb threats on campus will "crop up" and that Muslim and Arab-American students may become "the target of hateful comments," which means that school officials must become more active in "monitoring students' comments and behavior to prevent the escalation of such taunts into violence," reports the paper.

Some schools may revisit their crisis-preparedness plans, similar to what schools did in Oklahoma City and in Jefferson County, Colorado, after the Columbine High School incident.

At the conclusion of its article, EDUCATION WEEK lists several resources for schools and school districts, including the National School Safety and Security Services group, a Cleveland, Ohio-based, national consulting firm specializing in school security and crisis preparedness training, security assessments, and related safety consulting for K-12 schools, law enforcement, and other youth safety providers. The group reports on several issues that school and community leaders should consider in the aftermath of the attack:

- identify school and community mental health support services
- communicate openly and honestly with students
- review school crisis guidelines and implement pertinent responses relevant to the conditions facing your school
- maintain a balanced, common-sense approach to school safety and security
- review security issues related to access control, perimeter visibility and security, and other crime-prevention measures
- communicate hotline numbers and other methods that students, parents, staff and members of the school community can use to report safety and related concerns
- use school district call-in lines, web sites and other information sources that can be accessed by the school community to provide ongoing information to the school community

For more information, visit EDUCATION WEEK at <http://www.edweek.com> and search for the 0/19/01 issue. The special report is called *Terror Touches Our Schools*. For information on the National School Safety and Security Services, visit http://www.schoolsecurity.org/terrorist_response.html.

The National Association of School Psychologists also lists resources for schools at <http://www.nasponline.org/NEAT/>.

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