

The NEGP WEEKLY

September 28, 2001

Volume 2 — No. 119



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 5

FEATURE STORY.....Page 6

STATE POLICY NEWS

Appeals Process For Exit Exam: Massachusetts Takes A Second Look (Goal 3)

The Massachusetts Board of Education is reviewing findings from a task force that ordered the creation of an appeals process so high school students who narrowly fail the state exam could still receive diplomas (Hayward, BOSTON HERALD, 9/25). "Having an educationally sound and fundamentally fair performance appeals process for MCAS is essential to the integrity of the competency determination," said Education Commissioner David Driscoll.

Under the proposal, a student with passing grades who took the MCAS exam and its re-tests and scored between 200 and 220 would have the right to ask local school officials to file an appeal, reports the paper. School officials would screen appeal requests before forwarding them to a regional appeals board. The regional appeals board would review documentation that shows MCAS effort, good attendance and demonstration of 220-level work in classroom projects or on other standardized tests in math and English.

The regional board then would forward their recommendations to the commissioner's office, where final approval would be granted.

For more information on Massachusetts schools, visit the state department of education at <http://www.doe.mass.edu>.

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 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.

Louisiana's High-Stakes Testing: Court Gives Green Light (Goal 3)

A challenge to Louisiana's high-stakes testing system met with defeat in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit, reports EDUCATION WEEK (Robelen, 9/26). According to the paper, Parents Against Testing Before Teaching argued that flaws in the state's public education that denied students promotion because of their failure on a state test was a violation of the due-process guarantees under federal and state law.

While the group contends it is not against standardized testing, it has attacked the Louisiana system as "unfair and punitive to students," writes the paper, because students "have not been adequately prepared to pass the exams."

In a unanimous opinion, the three-judge panel rejected the plaintiffs appeal. The group plans to appeal the ruling.

For more information, visit the U.S. Court of Appeals, fifth circuit, at <http://www.ca5.uscourts.gov/>.

COMMUNITY AND LOCAL NEWS

Streamline Testing: Districts Cut Back On Exams (Goal Three: Student Achievement & Citizenship)

School districts nationwide are beginning to curtail testing as new federal testing is introduced to schools (Galley, EDUCATION WEEK, 9/19). Already, Montgomery County, Maryland's, school board has decided to eliminate the district's tests tied to its own curriculum. Both Buffalo and Rochester, New York, school districts also have "streamlined their testing to make way for more state-mandated exams," writes the paper.

Kathy Christie, a policy analyst for the Denver-based Education Commission of the States, said that "because [of the] time and money involved in maintaining a multi-layered assessment system, more districts may decide to pare down their testing," writes the paper.

The National Education Goals Panel

CHAIR 2001

Governor Frank O' Bannon of Indiana

CHAIR-ELECT 2002

Governor Jim Geringer of Wyoming

MEMBERS

Governor John Engler of Michigan

Governor Jim Hodges of South Carolina

Governor Frank Keating of Oklahoma

Governor Paul E. Patton of Kentucky

Governor Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire

Governor Tom Vilsack of Iowa

U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico

U.S. Senator Jim Jeffords of Vermont

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

For more information, visit EDUCATION WEEK at <http://www.edweek.com> and search for the 9/19 issue.

Revised Standards: Indiana Schools See Passing Grades Lowered (Goal 3)

Indiana's Governor's Education Roundtable agreed this month to lower the academic bar for schools, reports the INDIANAPOLIS STAR (Solida, 9/27). An Indiana school with only half of its students passing state exams will be categorized as making acceptable progress, under the "weakened" accountability plan, reports the paper. The plan delays implementation of the accountability plan and changes the labels schools will be given for their performance.

While educators favored the new plan, business leaders expressed concern. "I have very deep concerns about this plan," said Chris La Mothe, president of the Indiana Chamber of Commerce and a roundtable member. "The bar is too low."

The education community argues, however, that they need more time to adjust to the higher expectations.

For more information on Governor O'Bannon's education programs, visit www.obannon-kernan.com.

FEDERAL POLICY NEWS

College Loans: Default Rates Continue To Drop (Goal 6)

The cohort default rate has fallen to the lowest rate ever: 5.6 percent for FY99. U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige credited the colleges and universities that have worked diligently to reduce default rates at their institutions.

THE NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS



Goal 1: Ready to Learn



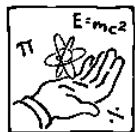
Goal 2: School Completion



Goal 3: Student Achievement and Citizenship



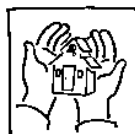
Goal 4: Teacher Education and Professional Development



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

To illustrate the positive impact of increased accountability, Paige announced that, for the first time, all 101 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have lowered their default rates sufficiently to keep them off the department's "watch list." By lowering default rates among their students, the colleges will maintain their eligibility for financial assistance, making it possible for the department to continue to offer federal student aid funds to their students.

Paige cited several activities that help to reduce default costs. For example:

- * capture of income tax rebate checks, wage garnishments, legal proceedings, and other collection tools have recouped over \$2.5 billion in FY 2001;
- * the department's new data match with the Department of Health and Human Services National Directory of New Hires, a database of all persons employed in the U.S., has proven to be a successful new tool for collection and has already resulted in an additional \$130 million collected in FY 2001 from defaulted borrowers;
- * the efforts by the secretary's team to improve the management of the student financial assistance programs so that the programs are removed from the U.S. General Accounting Office's government-wide list of "high-risk" programs;
- * private lenders and state guaranty agencies have set up programs, such as debt management, financial counseling and flexible repayment plans, that provide assistance to "at-risk" borrowers to prevent default, preventing more than \$10 billion from going into default in FY2000;
- * flexible repayment options, such as graduated and income-sensitive repayment plans, were enacted by Congress for all Federal loan programs in the Higher Education Amendments of 1998;
- * the department recently held Default Prevention Day symposiums in cities across the country to help more than 500 colleges develop successful default management programs and share practices that have proven effective in reducing the default rate; and,
- * the Student Loan Repayment Symposium brought together industry experts to share best practices for improving student repayment and identifying potential problems with financial aid administrators.

For more information on individual school default rates, visit the Department of Education at: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/defaultmanagement/cdr.html>

**Tolerance: Paige Urges Schools To Prevent Harassment Of Muslim & Arab-American Students
(Goal 7)**

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige today called on educators to take a leading role in the prevention of harassment and violence directed at students perceived to be Muslim or Arab American. Citing news reports of acts of intolerance, Paige wrote to the leaders of the nation's schools, colleges and universities urging them to take important steps to protect students from harassment and violence.

"We are all committed to making sure our children across America can attend school in a safe and secure environment free from harassment and threats," Paige said. "Today, I call upon school officials to work with students, parents, and community groups, to ensure that harassment and violence have no place in our schools."

In his letter Paige urged school officials to make sure that assemblies, classroom discussions and other school activities held to honor victims of the tragedies do not inadvertently foster the targeting of Muslim or Arab-American students for harassment.

Paige said educators should:

- * Encourage students to discuss diversity constructively and to express disagreement over ideas or beliefs in a respectful manner;
- * Have a system in place to intervene if particular students exhibit conduct that could endanger others; and
- * Encourage all students to report threats of racial or ethnic harassment.

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

**RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL
PRACTICES**

**Teens Speak Out: How They Would Improve The Schools
(Goal 3 & Goal 7)**

Members of the Phoenix (Arizona) Youth and Education Commission, an advisory council to the mayor, took part in a discussion with THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC and 12 News to discuss ways to improve their schools (Bland, ARIZONA REPUBLIC, 9/17). Groups across the state are meeting to "talk about what works and what doesn't in education," writes the paper.

Following are insights from the teens:

- * students can't learn unless schools are safe and teachers are happy to be there;
-

- * teachers at their schools are tired, overworked and taking second jobs to make ends meet;
 - * smaller classes would improve schools;
 - * the statewide AIMS test tests whether teachers can cram specific information into their heads, not how much they know;
 - * the teens want up-to-date textbooks, a good library, computers and enthusiastic teachers, not big-screen TVs in every classroom or huge football arenas;
 - * lunch should be longer, at least an hour, with a healthy food choice
- One student noted that keeping a closed campus at lunch might be a good idea.

At her school, the student council plays music and recruits students to play games and other activities. She also sees “jocks talking to brainy kids, Hispanics talking to African Americans.” She suggested that schools “should do more of this, letting kids paint murals and plant trees,” reports the paper. “Keep kids involved. Keep them united, and then you won’t have fights or cliques or shootings,” she suggested.

For more information, visit the ARIZONA REPUBLIC at <http://www.arizonarepublic.com>.

A Shortage Of Principals: California Reports (Goal 4)

A survey conducted by the Association of California School Administrators revealed that 90 percent of districts reported shortages of high school principal candidates, with 73 percent reporting shortages of elementary principal candidates (Bell, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, 9/23).

According to the report, while the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing has more than 34,000 people on file with administrative credentials in California, “more than enough to fill the 23,000 school administrative positions,” many of those educators are seeking administrative positions as teacher mentors or curriculum directors, jobs with less overall responsibility.

The paper writes that teachers in California and elsewhere have increasing responsibilities with little support. However, the “biggest hurdle” for recruiting principals is salary, writes the paper.

For more information on school administrators, visit the American Association of School Administrators at <http://www.aasa.org>.

FEATURE STORY

Infants And Toddler Care: Need To Do More (Goal 1)

Calling for a new social contract for children under three, some of the nation’s leading experts on early childhood argue for extending parental leave to all working Americans,

providing financial support during leave, improving the quality of child care for babies and including the youngest children in school readiness investments.

These are some of the findings and recommendations released in a new report issued by The David and Lucile Packard Foundation. “American families need and deserve a far better array of caregiving options to choose among - including paid parental leave and child care that is nurturing, trustworthy and affordable,” writes Richard Behrman, M.D., editor-in-chief of *The Future of Children*, a journal of The David and Lucile Packard Foundation. “We argue that it is the role of government to see to it that families of all income levels have equitable access to such supports.”

The Packard report cites recent studies of the child care provided in centers and home settings, including caregivers like grandmothers and family friends. Nearly half of the care received by infants and toddlers is just fair or poor.

“It is time for a new social contract to improve care for our children from birth to three to make sure they are getting the best start in life,” said Mary Lerner, PhD, editor of the journal issue. “The reality is that 61 percent of our nation’s mothers work during these early years. Mothers and fathers with babies need support in the form of time, money and good child care options as they make choices about the care their infants and toddlers will receive.

A key recommendation of the report is that school-readiness investments earmarked for children of preschool age should encompass the healthy, well-rounded development of infants and toddlers. “Children from birth to three should not be forgotten as decision makers debate and discuss ‘school-readiness’ for four- and five-year olds,” said Lerner. “Experiences starting at birth shape a child’s personality, social skills, and self-esteem, and these are all factors in children’s success in preschool and beyond.”

The report identifies needs of young children that “too often go unmet,” including:

* babies need plenty of time to bond with mother or father in the first year, even babies with single parents who are struggling to stay off welfare;

* small groups are best for babies and toddlers - babies benefit most from one-on-one time with a caregiver; toddlers need chances to explore, solve problems and learn about the world

* caregivers of children under three must do more than change diapers and keep children safe - they must understand how to encourage early learning and language and recognize signs of developmental problems

“All caregivers - parents in their homes, child care centers and licensed family child care providers, relatives and family friends - should be given the informational and financial support they need to care for young children,” said Lerner.

For more information visit the David and Lucile Packard Foundation at <http://www.futureofchildren.org>.

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.
