

# 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

### VOC ED STUDENTS: LEFT BEHIND BY HIGH-STAKES EXAMS?

(Goal Three: Student Achievement)

High-stakes exams do not “accurately account for the different ways in which kids learn,” said John Kosko, superintendent of the South Shore Vocational Technical School in Hanover, Massachusetts (EDUCATION DAILY, 11/2). Kosko comments highlight his concern that beginning next spring all high school sophomores in Massachusetts must pass the state exam, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System test (MCAS). “If vocational students spend 5 percent of their time studying subjects other than MCAS-related subjects, how can the MCAS be used to determine their learning ability and whether they should graduate?” he queried.

EDUCATION DAILY notes that the New York department of career and technical education (CTE) is recommending ways for vocational education students to pursue career programs at the same time they must meet stringent demands of state exams.

For more information, visit the Massachusetts Department of Education at <http://www.doe.mass.edu> or the New York Department of Education at <http://www.nysed.gov>.

\*\*\*December 6, 2000\*\*\*

**Goals Panel National Teleconference on Rising to the Test: Meeting the Challenges of Standards, Assessment and Accountability in Education Today.**

Visit the NEGP's web site at [www.negp.gov](http://www.negp.gov) or call the Goals Panel at (202)724-0078 to find out how you can get involved!

The NEGP WEEKLY is a publication of:  
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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](http://www.negp.gov). Publications requests can be made by mail, fax, e-mail, or on-line.

## **VIRGINIA'S STANDARDS OF LEARNING: LOOKING FOR PROOF IN PUDDING**

(Goal Three: Student Achievement)

A committee formed to examine Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) found the exams to be reliable but added that it is now time to see how they contribute to a student's learning and academic future (Honawar, WASHINGTON TIMES, 11/22). Board of Education President Kirk T. Schroder said the report of the six-member Technical Advisory Committee should "put to rest unfounded criticism and fears" over the SOLs.

While generally positive, the report questions the multiple-choice format used in all the tests. From the report: "The SOL assessments are composed exclusively of multiple choice questions. Therefore, it is possible that some of these standards are not fully reflected in these assessments." The report also raises concerns over the Virginia Board of Education's decision to ensure that the state's two-week deadline for returning test results to schools is met, saying the tight deadline could lead to errors when computing the results, notes the paper.

For more information, visit the Virginia Department of Education at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us>

## **COMMUNITY AND LOCAL NEWS**

### **STUDENT ID BADGES: A SCHOOL SAFETY ISSUE**

(Goal Seven: Safe Schools)

More schools across the country are requiring high school students to wear ID badges while on campus (Bower, ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH, 11/21). According to the paper, some teachers and administrators approve of the badges because it makes it easier to spot an outsider. Others say it helps everyone know each others' name. In many places, the ID badges also are used to check out library books or purchase food at the cafeteria.

One drawback to the cards is what to do when students forget them. At Pattonville High School, students get a warning and temporary badge for the first time they forget their badge. Parents are notified for the second offense.

## The National Education Goals Panel

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Illinois

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Idaho

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Missouri

If a student forgets his or her badge a third time, they are given either after-school detention or an in-school suspension.

Deborah Hauser, chairman of the English department at Pattonville High School, said the badges "have brought a renewed sense of identify with the school for staff and students," writes the paper.

For more information, visit the St. Louis public schools at <http://dtdl.slps.k12.mo.us>

### **INDIVIDUALIZED TESTING: A NEW TREND**

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

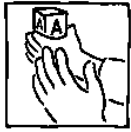
Teachers making "frequent and detailed assessments" of student work is spreading throughout American classrooms, with the Success for All Foundation leading the way, writes the WASHINGTON POST (Mathews, 11/21). The Towson, Maryland-based group has its "strictly paced" system in place in nearly 2,000 schools nationwide. Every eight weeks, each child in the early elementary grades is given a 20-minute oral exam. Data from the assessments are used to re-arrange reading groups, if necessary.

Teachers at Georgian Forest Elementary school (Montgomery County, Maryland) also use a second reading test called a "running record," which records a child's reading errors. Children struggling to read may receive a running record on a daily basis.

Some schools also use frequent assessments in math.

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

## 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

## FEDERAL POLICY NEWS

### VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: THE UPS AND DOWNS

(Goal Three: Student Achievement and Goal Six: Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning)

A new Department of Education report shows a decline in high school enrollment in vocational education classes throughout the 1980s and 1990s, but the data is difficult to evaluate due to the wide range of courses that constitute vocational education. The percentage of students who completed vocational education dropped from 33.7 percent to 25 percent, according to the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

Yet, several factors "complicate" the data, notes EDUCATION DAILY. For example, vocational education courses can range from welding to computer programming. According to the report, the overall decline rates found between 1982 and 1998 were primarily due to drops in the two largest vocational areas - trade and industry (from 14.8 percent to 9.8 percent) and business (from 11.6 percent to 4.8 percent). Other vocational education areas - health care, technology and communications, food service and hospitality and childcare and education — showed an increase.

For more information on the report Changes in High School Vocational Coursetaking in a Larger Perspective, visit NCES at <http://www.nces.ed.gov>. Or, visit EDUCATION DAILY at <http://www.eddaily.com>.

### SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING: A LOOK AT GENDER AND RACE-ETHNICITY

(Goal Five: Math and Science and Goal Six: Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning)

Another National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report examines the gaps related to gender and race-ethnicity in entry, persistence and attainment of postsecondary science and engineering education. First, researchers examined the link between high school experience and entry into a science and engineering postsecondary program to determine the extent to which women and under represented minorities continue to have lower entry rates in to science and engineering programs at

the secondary level.

A second analysis was conducted to address issues relating to the persistence and degree attainment by underrepresented minorities and women in postsecondary science and engineering study.

For more information, visit NCES at <http://www.nces.ed.gov>.

## RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

### **STANDARDS: HELPING THE YOUNGEST CHILDREN** (Goal One: Ready To Learn)

At a National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) meeting this month, some education researchers pointed out that state standards often overlook pre-school- and early elementary-age children because the standards are “crafted by middle and high school educators,” writes EDUCATION WEEK (Jacobson, 11/22). Diane Paynter, a senior associate at Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL), said her group’s research finds that K-2 state standards typically note the skills or knowledge that children master by the end of second grade, without specifying the “underlying knowledge” that educators need to help children reach that point.

McREL, a regional education lab funded by the U.S. Department of Education has produced A Framework for Early Literacy Instruction that provides more detailed guidance around early literacy instruction than afforded by currently available national and state standards documents.

For more information, visit NAEYC at <http://www.naeyc.org> or McREL at <http://www.mcrel.org>.

### **“LEARNING TO LEAD, LEADING TO LEARN”: PRINCIPAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** (Goal Four: Teacher Education and Professional Development)

The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) has released a new report that calls on improving school quality through principal professional development. Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn holds that principals today must not only handle school management and administration but also be able “to coach, teach, and develop the teachers in their schools.”

The report includes a series of recommendations for the federal and state governments and for schools, networks and districts.

For more information and a copy of the report, visit NSDC at <http://www.nsd.org>.

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## FEATURE STORY

### **TURNING POINTS: A LOOK AT ADOLESCENCE**

(Goal Three: Student Achievement, Goal Four: Teacher Education and Professional Development and Goal Eight: Parent Involvement)

Coming a decade after Carnegie's first Turning Points report that served as a catalyst for middle school reform, the Carnegie Corporation of New York this month released the latest in this series, Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century. This volume calls for a rigorous curriculum, instructional methods that will prepare all students to achieve higher standards, targeted professional development opportunities for teachers and involved parents and communities, amount other items.

"Turning Points 2000 provides a perfect blend of practical guidance and grand vision, looking with hope toward a day when the developmental needs of all children are met," said Dr. James Comer, Maurice Falk Professor of Child Psychiatry, Yale Child Study Center. "The authors skillfully bridge the gap between research and practice as they share strategies for families, communities and institutions to collaboratively prepare adolescents for life."

The report's recommendations for middle grades include:

- \* Teach a curriculum grounded in rigorous, public academic standards for what students should know and be able to do, relevant to the concerns of adolescents and based on how students learn best.
- \* Use instructional methods designed to prepare all students to achieve higher standards and become lifelong learners.
- \* Staff middle grades schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents, and engage teachers in ongoing, targeted professional development opportunities.
- \* Organize relationships for learning to create a climate of intellectual development and a caring community of shared educational purpose.
- \* Govern democratically, through direct or representative participation by all school staff members, the adults who know the students best.
- \* Provide a safe and healthy school environment as part of improving academic performance and developing caring and ethical citizens.
- \* Involve parents and communities in supporting student learning and healthy development.

"There is mounting evidence that when educators stay the course of comprehensive reform, student outcomes improve," said Davis, former national director of the Middle Grade School State Policy Initiative (MGSSPI).

"If we have learned anything over the past 10 years, it is that gains in student achievement and other positive outcomes for students require comprehensive implementation of reforms over an extended period of time," Davis reported. "Moreover, comprehensive reform is difficult work, fraught with unanticipated barriers. Yet, we are seeing some successes."

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“If [the authors’] deep understanding of what’s needed and what works for adolescents were shared by every policy maker and educator, we would indeed see a major transformation in the education of our young” said Linda Darling-Hammond, Stanford University. “This book is a must-read for everyone who works with children and youth. For that matter, it’s essential for everyone who cares about the health of our young people and our society.”

The book indicates that effective instruction must mesh with three other aspects: “the standards and resulting curriculum outlining what student should learn; the assessments students will use to demonstrate their knowledge and skills; and the needs, interests and learning styles of the students themselves.”

For more information visit the National Middle School Association at <http://www.nmsa.org>.

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