

The NEGP WEEKLY

December 8, 2000

Volume 2 — No. 83



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

TEXAS' TEACHER RECRUITMENT EFFORT: A NEW PERMIT FOR TEACHING

(Goal Four: Teacher Education and Professional Development)

Early last month, the Texas State Board for Educator Certification voted to consolidate three temporary teaching credentials into one "transitional permit" aimed to attract people who want to switch careers. The new permit targets individuals who are not graduates of traditional or alternative teacher-preparation programs nor certified in other states (Blair, EDUCATION WEEK, 11/29). Instead, these recruits would be rated based on life experiences and scores on a test they would take once they had entered the classroom.

John Cole, president of the Texas Federation of Teachers, argued against the new policy, which must be approved by the state school board, saying the permit would open the floodgates to untrained teachers who could end up teaching outside their field. The proposal would require administrators to notify parents if their child's teacher is teaching outside of their field only if the teacher failed the state exam, which would be scheduled after the first year of teaching.

For more information, visit the Texas State Board for Educator Certification at <http://www.sbec.state.tx.us>.

FACT OF THE WEEK

Between 1990 and 1997, the U.S. and 50 states (out of 54) significantly increased the percentages of mothers who began receiving prenatal care during their first trimester of pregnancy.

—The National Education Goals Report: Building a nation of learners, 1999

MARYLAND: STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IMPROVES

(Goal Three: Student Achievement)

Baltimore was among the 19 of 24 school systems in Maryland to show overall improvements in student achievement over the past year, according to the results of the Maryland School Performance Report. Noting that "we are steadily realizing our vision for accountable, high-performing public schools in Maryland," State Superintendent of Schools Nancy Grasmick reported that Howard County topped the state in grades 5 and 8, while Kent

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.

County on Maryland's Eastern Shore had the overall highest performance.

The state's annual report card measures how well schools are able to teach students basic skills and the application of those skills and knowledge in real-world problem solving exercises. Maryland's 2000 composite statewide test score jumped to 45.3 percent, up 1.5 percentage points over last year and 13.6 points since the scores were first compiled in 1993. That means that 45.3 percent of students statewide scored at or above the satisfactory level on the 2000 exam.

However, performance gaps exist: girls outperform boys in reading and math and white and Asian students outperform African-American and Hispanic students. Economically disadvantaged students fall behind their wealthier peers.

Ninety-three schools across the state currently are on the state's list of "reconstitution-eligible" schools, a probationary program that calls for school improvement plans and additional resources while schools work with the local system and state on overall school improvement. These schools have shown strong gains this year, with about two-thirds of the schools on the list since 1994 boosting their scores by 1999.

For more information, visit the Maryland State Department of Education at <http://www.msde.state.md.us>.

COMMUNITY AND LOCAL NEWS

A HIGH-TECH HIGH SCHOOL: BUILD IT AND KIDS WILL STAY IN IDAHO

(Goal Two: High School Completion, Goal Three: Student Achievement And Goal Six: Adult Literacy And Lifelong Learning)

An emerging high-tech industry led Idaho school leaders to build a cutting-edge, high-tech high school in Boise. Their goal is to halt the exodus of non-college-bound students to the "greener economic pastures" of other states, according to EDUCATION DAILY (Learner, 11/15).

The Dehryl A. Dennis Professional-Technical Education Center is a joint effort of Boise's two high school districts. About 600 high school students attend class at the center. All of the instructors are certified in their fields and come from industry. Students can specialize in auto technology, auto-body repair, welding and construction. There are labs for each of these concentrations and smaller labs that contain electronics diagnostic equipment. Students have good opportunities to head immediately to the world of work, but are encouraged to pursue higher education. Students can earn up to 15 credit hours for college due to articulation agreements arranged between the high school and area colleges.

For more information, visit the Boise school district at <http://www.sd01.k12.id.us>

The National Education Goals Panel

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HOW TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOLS?: HOUSTON'S HIRING BUSINESS MANAGERS

(Goal Four: Teacher Education and Professional Development)

The Houston school district is recruiting and training more school-based business managers in an attempt to "ease the increasing managerial burdens placed on its principals (Learner, EDUCATION DAILY, 11/27). Principals today must deal with more litigation and the standards movement has added a layer of accountability that holds the principal responsible. Adding a business manager will free up principals to focus on instructional issues, explained Cathy Mincberg, Houston's chief of staff for business services.

Michael Carr, a spokesman from the National Association of Secondary School Principals, predicts that soon schools may have co-principals - one to handle managerial duties, the other for instruction. The trend to hire one principal from the business community is not one recommended by Carr. He argues that while people trained in business may be able to run the school they do not have the instructional background to help provide an education for students.

For more information, visit the Houston public schools at <http://www.houston.isd.tenet.edu>

FEDERAL POLICY NEWS

SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS FUNDS: HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THEY?

(Goal Seven: Safe Schools)

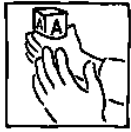
Problems exist at the school district level in using federal funds from the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program, according to a new report to be released by the U.S. Department of Education. EDUCATION DAILY writes that the examination of Safe and Drug-Free Schools funds are applied haphazardly and spread too thin at the local level (Cardman, 11/22).

For example, only half of the 600 local education agencies surveyed have developed a measurable goal for their prevention activities. Another problem is that few districts (9 percent) put in place a prevention program that is grounded in research.

In 1998, the Department of Education issued "Principles of Effectiveness," a document that discussed the use of program funds and "emphasized accountability and research-based practices," notes ED DAILY. Yet, the report concludes that it is "questionable" whether districts are in compliance with the regulations.

For more information on the report, Progress in Prevention: Report on the National Study of Local Education Agency Activities Under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act," visit the Department of Education at <http://www.ed.gov>. The report soon will be available at the web site.

THE NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS



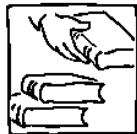
Goal 1: Ready to Learn



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

THE BENEFITS OF KINDERGARTEN: GAINS IN READING AND MATH

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

Children from all economic backgrounds improve their reading and math performance during kindergarten and increase their readiness for future learning, according to a new report released by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). However, significant gaps in more advanced skills continue to exist between at-risk children and their peers.

U.S. Education Secretary Richard Riley said the report brings rise to numerous questions, including: "Would universal pre-school reduce the gaps in skills that appear before children even enter kindergarten? Would all-day kindergarten make a difference? Would after-school programs in elementary and middle schools be especially beneficial to at-risk students in closing the gap? What can parents do long before their children enter kindergarten?"

The Kindergarten Year found that after a year of kindergarten:

- > those children who could recognize their letters increased from 65 percent to 94 percent;
- > children who could understand the letter-sound relationship at the beginning of words rose from 29 percent to 72 percent;
- > those who could understand the letter-sound relationship at the end of words increased from 17 percent to 52 percent

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

RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

TEACHING TEACHERS AND STANDARDS: THE ROLE OF TEACHER PREP

(Goal Four: Teacher Education and Professional Development)

In a paper for the Council for Basic Education's (CBE) BASIC EDUCATION publication, Diana Rigden writes that standards have not only "raised the stakes for what elementary and secondary students need to know and be able to do," but also have "raised expectations for what teachers need to know and be able to do." In her paper, Rigden, a vice president at CBE, argues that a "thorough grounding in the core liberal arts is essential for every elementary and secondary teacher." It is essential for teachers to possess a "deep understand of the subjects they will teach and the intellectual curiosity to continue learning throughout their teaching careers," she adds.

Her paper introduces the November 2000 issue of BASIC MONTHLY, which focuses on Liberal Arts and Teacher Training.

For more information, visit CBE at <http://www.c-b-e.org>.

TEACHER-PARENT BONDS: A HARVARD PROJECT

(Goal Four: Teacher Education and Professional Development
and Goal Eight: Parental Involvement)

The Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE) is a new project of Harvard University's graduate school of education. FINE grew out of a research report authored by Elena Lopez, senior consultant at the Harvard Family Research Project, that found teachers lacked training and skills to build productive relationships with families and community members. The research concluded that "a serious discrepancy existed between pre-service preparation and the family-involvement activities that teachers were increasingly being expected to perform in schools."

FINE's goals include:

- > strengthening the visibility of promising family involvement prep courses and curricula;
- > exercising leadership in knowledge development and strategies to meet professional and state standards in family and community relations; and
- > developing assessment methods for continuous innovation and improvement in family involvement training.

For more information, visit FINE at Harvard University's web site: <http://www.gse.harvard.edu>.

FEATURE STORY

PURSUING EXCELLENCE: AN INTERNATIONAL STUDY OF EIGHTH-GRADE MATH AND SCIENCE ACHIEVEMENT

(Goal Five: Math and Science)

Compared to students in 37 participating nations, American eighth graders are above the international average in math and science performance, according to the Third International Mathematics and Science Study-Repeat (TIMSS-R). TIMSS-R compares the performance of fourth-graders in 1995 with the performance of eighth-grade students in 1999.

"Our students are successfully learning more math and science every year they're in school," said U.S. Education Secretary Richard Riley, "but we can do even better." He pointed to the recommendations of the Glenn Commission that called for improving the professional development of K-12 teachers, "widening the pipeline of people going into math and science teaching, to retaining those teachers once we get them in the pipeline."

The report, Pursuing Excellence: Comparisons of International Eighth-Grade Mathematics and Science Achievement from a U.S. Perspective, 1995-1999 was sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics and the National Science Foundation in the U.S. and by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. Among the report's findings are:

- > In science (1999), the average score of U.S. eighth-grade students was higher than the international average in earth science, life science, chemistry, environmental and resource issues, and scientific inquiry and the nature of science.
 - > U.S. eighth graders scored at the international average in physics.
 - > In math (1999), U.S. students performed better than the international average in fractions and number sense, data representation, analysis and probability and algebra.
 - > U.S. eighth-grade students performed at the international average in measurement and geometry.
 - > The performance of eighth-grade students in math and science was about the same in 1999 as in 1995.
 - > In both math and science, U.S. students reported more often than did students in other nations that they use class time to begin homework.
 - > Seventy-four percent of U.S. eighth-grade math students reported often beginning homework in class compared to the international average of 42 percent; 57 percent of science students reported often beginning
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homework in school compared to the international average of 41 percent.

> U.S. eighth graders were more likely than students in other nations to be taught by teachers who majored in education, as likely as others to be taught by teachers who majored in math education, and less likely than their international peers to be taught math by teachers who majored in math.

> U.S. eighth-grade students were more likely to be taught by a science teacher with a degree in education, as likely as their international peers to be taught science by teachers with a college major or main area of study in biology, chemistry or science education, and less likely to be taught science by teachers with a degree in physics.

“It’s apparent that we need to make a major investment in upgrading teacher skills in math, science and other subjects,” said Riley.

TIMSS-R examines information on math and science achievement, schooling, curricula, instruction and the lives of teachers and students from 38 nations.

For more information or a copy of the TIMSS-R results visit <http://www.nces.ed.gov>.

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 Executive Director: Ken Nelson
Publisher: Barbara A. Pape
www.negp.gov

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