

# EDUCATION DAILY

The education community's independent daily news service

## Conference report: CoSN

### E-rate lying on its death bed, Senate staffers warn

Grassroots campaign involving actual teachers, parents best chance to save it

A congressional battle over the E-rate program could be decided within the next two weeks, and districts and other constituents must lobby their lawmakers now if it's to survive into 2006, a Senate staffer said yesterday.

*One school's success, see p. 2*

"We have a huge, huge battle," the Democratic staffer said, and the House of Representatives will be the biggest opponent. "E-rate is in real jeopardy."

The law, which redirects surcharges on phone bills to help connect schools and libraries to the Internet, was conceived in the Senate. Although the House passed it, many members now want it to go away, a Republican Senate staffer added.

#### Grassroots could counter bad PR

Both staffers spoke to district technology directors at the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) conference, and both urged them to return to their hometowns and begin a grassroots campaign telling their lawmakers how E-rate is helping their districts.

The campaign would counterbalance the negative publicity that has come out of several House hearings outlining fraud and waste in the program (ED, June 17, 2004) and a Government Accountability Office report released last week (ED, March 21).

The Democratic staffer described the hearings as "aggressive." The fraud cases the House has focused on are old news, the staffer added. They date back to the 1999-2001 period.

Every program of this size has some fraud and abuse, the Democratic staffer said. The fraud cases on which the House has focused are small compared to the number of success stories, but lawmakers are not receiving the message from the right people, she said.

(See **E-RATE** on page 2)

## Today's Highlights

Vol. 38, No. 56 Thursday, March 24, 2005

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16 items, including:

- Deadlines announced for campus-based programs
- OSEP leadership conference coming up next week
- Utah governor nixes student medication legislation
- Harvard report outlines racial gaps in California

## NCLB implementation

### Scores rise, but challenges loom on horizon, CEP says

While progress is evident, educators still say funding is inadequate to reach goal

As the No Child Left Behind Act enters its third year, test scores have improved in most states and districts, but educators fear they lack sufficient resources to meet the escalating demands of the law, a new report found.

*Key findings and recommendations, see p. 4*

Of the 49 states surveyed by the Center on Education Policy (CEP), 36 reported improvement in student achievement on state tests from the 2003-04 to the 2004-05 school year (see *Table 1, p. 5*). A majority of the 314 districts surveyed also reported rising test scores.

However, CEP president Jack Jennings cautioned that the improvement in test scores cannot be directly attributed to NCLB, because the survey was not designed to answer that question.

(See **CHALLENGES** on page 4)

*NOTE: Education Daily will not publish again until Monday, March 28.*

## E-RATE (continued from page 1)

They expect to hear from lobbyists and organizations such as CoSN, but they're not hearing from teachers, parents and students, she added.

Those lobbying lawmakers over topics such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act or Title I funding need to refocus on E-rate or they will lose the program, which now constitutes the fourth largest federal contribution for K-12 funding, the Democratic staffer warned.

Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.V., who was instrumental in writing the law in the 1990s, said the Federal Communications Commission should strengthen its oversight of E-rate, but Congress should not ignore the great amount of good it has done.

"We must also remember that the vast majority of the 91,000 E-rate schools receive funding and invest their own matching funds wisely," Rockefeller added.

Rockefeller, along with Sens. Olympia Snowe, R-Maine, Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, and Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii, has co-sponsored a bill, S. 241, to permanently exempt the program from the Anti-deficiency Act.

The anti-deficiency law requires federal programs to obligate recipients to only what they have in their budget accounts (ED, Nov. 3, 2004). The act prevented the Universal Service Administration Company, which administers E-rate, from sending out commitment letters last year.

Congress passed a one-year exemption late last year (ED, Dec. 10), but that window will close soon, the staffers warned.

If the bill is not passed by the year's end, Congress will have two bad options, the Democratic staffer said: either sharply raise taxes collected from phone bills or terminate the program.

She said the Senate bill needs an additional 20 co-sponsors in the next two weeks if it is to progress and make its way through the legislative process by the end of the year.

### House an obstacle

The Republican staffer said House opposition will remain a problem. Many members

## One school's success

Darryl LaGrace, technology director of the Lemon Grove, Calif. school district, will distribute wireless tablets to each student using E-rate funds.

While E-Rate does not pay for hardware such as computers and tablets, it can be used for the wireless technology that allows students to carry their tablets from class to class.

The tablets have only basic software connected to a server, where all the computing power rests.

The district also has entered a partnership with a local cable company to install the wireless technology in students' homes, which he said is crucial.

If only the wealthy students can carry the tablets home and others can't, "You again have a situation of haves and have nots," he said.

Nearly seven in 10 of the district's 4,300 students qualify for free or reduced lunches.

want the Universal Service tax to revert back to rural telephone connectivity. Others want to see it eliminated altogether.

Telecommunications companies need to be lobbied as well, the Democratic staffer said. One telecom giant, who she would only confirm begins with the letter "Q," has lobbied Congress hard to have all "social programs" cut out of the next wave of telecommunications law.

"These companies need to be asked, 'Why do you want to disconnect kids?'" the Democratic staffer said.

Once the exemption is passed, E-rate has the benefit of not being part of the yearly appropriations process, the Republican staffer noted. The fund will be relatively safe.

Until that happens, constituents need to ensure that their lawmakers know what E-rate is doing for them, the Democratic staffer said.

They should pitch positive stories to their local newspapers because lawmakers read them. When lawmakers visit their districts, schools need to invite them for a look at what E-rate is doing for the students.

"You've got to get the message out now," she said.

—Stew Magnuson



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**Study hall**

**Study links power-plant mercury emissions to autism**

A new study appears to be the first to document a correlation between incidences of autism and low doses of mercury emitted from coal-burning power plants.

Released last week by the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA), the study shows a multiple-digit increase in the rate of autism for every 1,000 pounds of mercury released environmentally in Texas counties.

The study's author, Raymond Palmer, took publicly available data from the Environmental Protection Agency's toxic release inventory and linked them with data from the Texas Education Agency.

"I found that for every 1,000 pounds of mercury released into the air, the rates of autism increased by 17 percent," he said. The study also showed a 43 percent increase in special education services rate for every 1,000 pounds emitted.

**A 'contributing cause'**

For years, experts have been making the connection between mercury exposure and learning disabilities.

Rep. Dan Burton, R-Ind., a leading champion of autistic causes, held hearings last year as chairman of the House Government Reform Subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness, scientifically examining the correlation between mercury and autism.

"There's no question in my mind that mercury in the environment is a contributing cause," he told *Education Daily*. "Any amount of mercury in the water, in the air, in vaccines or

**GAO findings**

- The number of children ages 6-21 diagnosed with autism and served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act has increased by more than 500 percent over the last 10 years.
- Children receiving services for autism under IDEA increased from less than 20,000 in 1993 to almost 120,000 in 2002 (the most recent year for which figures are available).
- The estimated per-pupil expenditure by disability in 1999-2000 indicated that autistic children cost the federal government \$18,800 per student, up from \$12,500 for the average special education student. Children not enrolled in special education classes cost approximately \$6,556 annually.

*Source: The Government Accountability Office's 2005 report Special Education: Children with Autism, which can be found at [www.gao.gov/new.items/d05220.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05220.pdf).*

anything else is going to have an adverse impact on neurological problems in children and adults."

The Government Accountability Office released a report this year (*see sidebar, above*), commissioned by Burton, focusing on the costs of educating children with autism in special education. However, the UTHSCSA study is the first to tie low-dose mercury exposure through power-plant emissions specifically to autism.

*The UTHSCSA study will appear in the peer-reviewed journal Health & Place.*

—Steve Brown

**Survey details challenges facing states with native students**

Many state leaders confront significant challenges when it comes to educating American Indian and Alaskan native students with disabilities, but a handful of states already have programs in place that address their unique needs, a new survey finds.

The most prominent struggles, according to the survey by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, include improving graduation and dropout rates, reaching students who are geographically isolated, finding culturally relevant curricula, recruiting and retaining teachers, and coordinating with schools under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

American Indian and Alaska Native Students with Disabilities *is available at* [www.nasdse.org/publications.cfm](http://www.nasdse.org/publications.cfm).

—Kara Arundel

**Number of schools operated and/or funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs**

Number of schools	States
1	Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Oregon, Wyoming
2	California, Florida, Idaho, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina
3	Maine, Montana, Wisconsin
4	Minnesota
5	Oklahoma
8	Mississippi, Washington
13	North Dakota
22	South Dakota
44	New Mexico
54	Arizona

*Source: National Association of State Directors of Special Education and BIA.*

## CHALLENGES (continued from page 1)

“NCLB is a factor, [but] you cannot say the gains are solely due to NCLB,” he said. “NCLB is a nuisance in some states because they are already doing reform.”

### Mixed effects

CEP’s report aimed to quantify the effects of NCLB on states, districts and schools as educators continue to struggle with implementing key aspects of the law.

Many states and districts reported increased instruction time for low-performing students and narrowing of the achievement gap between English-language learners and their English-speaking peers (see *Tables 2 and 3, p. 5*).

Almost every district reported using student test data to inform instruction and align curriculum with standards and assessments. About 96 percent of the districts said they increased the quality and quantity of teacher professional development.

States also reported on their strategies to improve student achievement. The majority used special grants and alignment techniques to boost scores (see *Table 4, p. 5*).

### Roadblocks

However, the report cautioned there are “clear warning signs of problems” that could undermine the success of the law.

The most serious problem, the report found, is a lack of capacity in states and districts to help schools failing the academic standards under NCLB.

CEP’s surveys showed 45 states considered limited staff size a serious or moderate challenge; and 31 reported that limited staff expertise was a serious or moderate challenge. Only 11 states indicated current federal NCLB funds were adequate to help schools identified as in need of improvement.

State education agencies “are simply not designed to do the work that needs to be done to turn around low-performing schools [under NCLB],” said CEP director Patty Sullivan.

## Recommendations

The Center on Education Policy report recommended that the Education Department:

- Adjust testing and accountability requirements for students with disabilities and with limited English proficiency (ED, March 15).
- Provide states and districts with additional funding and other resources.
- Allow districts in improvement to provide tutoring services under the law so long as they operate an effective program (ED, March 16).

## Key findings

- 69 percent of the districts surveyed did not know the effect of the No Child Left Behind Act’s school choice on student achievement. Only 3 percent said choice helped raise student achievement somewhat.
- 42 percent of the districts said they did not know the effect of supplemental educational services on student achievement. About 20 percent believed SES helped raise student achievement.
- About half of the districts required schools to spend a certain amount of time in reading and math each day. About 21 percent said they had increased instruction time in these subjects since NCLB.
- States and districts said all or most teachers are highly qualified as defined by NCLB. However, the distribution of these teachers among schools with large concentrations of poor or minority students is inequitable.
- A majority of states and districts wanted existing accountability requirements for students with disabilities and with limited English proficiency changed or eliminated (ED, March 15).

## More funding needed

Approximately 80 percent of the districts surveyed reported costs associated with implementing NCLB that are not covered by federal funds — including teacher training to meet the law’s highly qualified definition and managing data collection and analysis.

The additional responsibilities under the law occurred as a large number of districts received less Title I funds this school year, the report noted.

Jennings warned insufficient resources will pose a serious threat for states and districts as they continue to face the consequences of NCLB.

“Part of the fear isn’t what’s here today,” said Jennings, adding that President Bush has requested less money for education in his budget (ED, Feb. 8). “The fear is about what’s going to happen as time goes on without the additional resources and expertise.”

The “perpetual cry for more money,” responded Ray Simon, Education Department’s assistant secretary for elementary and secondary education, “simply does not comport with the facts.”

Simon noted the president has increased education funding by \$13.8 billion, or 33 percent, since taking office.

“The difference is that this administration is holding states accountable for delivering results with those taxpayer funds,” Simon said.

From the Capital to the Classroom: Year 3 of the No Child Left Behind Act *is available at* [www.ctredpol.org/pubs/nclby3](http://www.ctredpol.org/pubs/nclby3).

—Katherine Shek

**Table 1: Percentage of districts reporting changes in student achievement based on state assessments used for NCLB**

	Achievement improving	Achievement declining	Achievement the same
Total (all districts)	72 percent	6 percent	22 percent
Very large districts	75 percent	9 percent	16 percent
Large districts	95 percent	0 percent	5 percent
Medium districts	80 percent	12 percent	8 percent
Small districts	68 percent	5 percent	27 percent

**Table 2: Number of states reporting extent to which achievement gaps among different student groups have changed over the last year**

	Narrowing	Staying the same	Widening	No gap	Subgroup too small	Don't know
White vs. black	21	14	5	0	2	7
White vs. Asian	6	17	3	10	5	8
White vs. Hispanic	18	14	6	0	3	7
White vs. Native American	11	12	5	0	11	8
LEP vs. non-LEP	13	12	8	1	2	12
With disabilities vs. without	17	11	7	0	0	12
Low income vs. not	20	17	1	0	0	12

**Table 3: Percentage of districts reporting extent to which achievement gaps among different student groups have changed over the last year**

	Narrowing	Staying the same	Widening	No gap	Subgroup too small	Don't know
White vs. black	18 percent	12 percent	1 percent	2 percent	64 percent	4 percent
White vs. Asian	5 percent	11 percent	1 percent	4 percent	76 percent	3 percent
White vs. Hispanic	17 percent	15 percent	5 percent	4 percent	56 percent	3 percent
White vs. Native American	6 percent	7 percent	0 percent	2 percent	81 percent	4 percent
LEP vs. non-LEP	18 percent	14 percent	5 percent	2 percent	56 percent	4 percent
With disabilities vs. without	25 percent	40 percent	14 percent	1 percent	14 percent	6 percent
Low income vs. not	32 percent	36 percent	7 percent	5 percent	9 percent	10 percent

**Table 4: Number of states using various strategies to raise achievement in schools identified for improvement**

Improvement strategy	To a great extent	Moderately	Minimally	Not at all	Don't know
Special grants to districts to support school improvement efforts	24	17	4	2	1
Matching curriculum and instruction with standards and/or assessments	22	19	5	1	2
School support teams	22	11	11	4	0
Providing before- or after-school, weekend, or summer programs	13	13	7	11	3
Distinguished teachers	8	14	10	14	1
Mentor or coach for principals	7	12	7	16	2
Education or management consultant	4	10	14	16	3
Additional full-time, school-based staff to support teacher development	2	8	10	22	5

Source: Center on Education Policy.

## Daily Briefing

### Education Department

#### Federal Register

#### Campus-based program deadlines announced

**Notice of deadline dates:** The Education Department has announced deadline dates for its campus-based programs, the Perkins Loan program, the Work-Study program and the Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant program.

**Web:** [www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/announcements/2005-1/032205c.html](http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/announcements/2005-1/032205c.html).

#### ED seeks comments on graduate programs

**Notice seeking comment:** The Education Department is seeking comment on the education and employment outcomes of 4,400 Jacob K. Javits Fellowship Program, Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need Fellowship Program, Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship Program, and Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship Program fellowship recipients from 1997 to 1999. Data will be used to assess meeting fellowship program objectives and help refine program policies.

**Deadline:** May 23.

**E-mail:** [katrina.ingalls@ed.gov](mailto:katrina.ingalls@ed.gov).

**Web:** <http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20051800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2005/pdf/05-5716.pdf>.

#### \$1.6 million available for grants to boost qualified vocational rehabilitation personnel

**Notice inviting applications:** The Education Department invites applications to support projects that increase the number of qualified vocational rehabilitation personnel working in state vocational rehabilitation or related agencies.

**Funds:** \$1.6 million for 16 awards of \$75,000 to \$100,000 a year each. Seventy-five percent of all grant funds must be used for direct payment of student scholarships.

**Eligibility:** Higher education institutions, nonprofit organizations and state and local agencies.

**Areas:** Eligible areas are: rehabilitation administration (C); rehabilitation technology (E); vocational evaluation and work adjustment (F); rehabilitation of mentally ill individuals (H); rehabilitation psychology (J); specialized personnel for rehabilitation of individuals who are blind or have a vision impairment (P); rehabilitation of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing (Q); job development and placement services to individuals with disabilities (R).

**Deadline:** April 28.

**Contact:** Marilyn Fountain, (202) 245-7346. CFDA #84.129, C, E, F, H, J, P, Q, and R.

**E-mail:** [marilyn.fountain@ed.gov](mailto:marilyn.fountain@ed.gov).

**Web:** [www.ed.gov/news/fedregister](http://www.ed.gov/news/fedregister).

#### \$16.5 million available for grants to improve teacher recruitment, preparation and support

**Notice inviting applications:** To address the challenge of America's teacher shortage by making significant and

lasting systemic changes in the way teachers are recruited, prepared and supported to teach in high-need schools.

**Funds:** \$16.5 million for 20 awards ranging from \$650,000 to \$1.1 million each. The project period is three years.

**Eligibility:** States (including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the insular areas) and partnerships that comprise, at a minimum, an institution of higher education with an eligible teacher preparation program, a school of arts and sciences, and a high-need local educational agency. States and partnerships that previously received a grant under this program are not eligible for a fiscal 2005 grant.

**Deadline:** May 2.

**Contact:** Luretha Kelley, (202) 502-7645. CFDA #84.336C.

**E-mail:** [luretha.kelley@ed.gov](mailto:luretha.kelley@ed.gov).

**Web:** [www.ed.gov/news/fedregister](http://www.ed.gov/news/fedregister).

#### Upcoming Event

**Who:** Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

**What:** OSEP Annual Leadership Conference IDEA 2004: Support Student Success.

**When:** March 29-31.

**Where:** Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill, 400 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C.

This three-day conference brings together OSEP officials, state special education leaders, parents and others to discuss the new Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act and special education funding. John Hager, assistant secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, will address conferees March 29.

*For more information, go to*

[www.federalresourcecenter.org/frc/confer.htm#osep](http://www.federalresourcecenter.org/frc/confer.htm#osep) and click on "Agenda for 2005 OSEP Leadership Conference."

#### Education Insiders

#### ED-funded Appalachian Regional Commission fosters economic development

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is a federal-state partnership that works with the people of the 13 Appalachian states to create opportunities for self-sustaining economic development and improved quality of life. The Education Department's Office of Vocational and Adult Education distributes federal funds that are transferred from the ARC to local communities.

Each year, ARC provides funding for several hundred projects in support of economic and human development. There are 14 commission members: the governors of the 13 Appalachian states and a federal co-chair appointed by the president and subject to Senate confirmation. Each year, the 13 governors elect one governor to serve as states' co-chair of the commission.

**Members:** Anne B. Pope serves as the 10th federal co-chair of the Appalachian Regional Commission; Gov. Robert Taft, R-Ohio, serves as co-chair; and Richard J. Peltz, serves as alternate federal co-chair.

The APC governors commission includes: Alabama

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Gov. Bob Riley, Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue, Kentucky Gov. Ernie Fletcher, Maryland Gov. Robert Ehrlich, Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour, New York Gov. George Pataki, North Carolina Gov. Michael Easley, Pennsylvania Gov. Edward Rendell, South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford, Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen, Virginia Gov. Mark Warner, West Virginia Gov. Joe Manchin.

*For details see [www.arc.gov/index.jsp](http://www.arc.gov/index.jsp).*

### Program Performance Update

#### Jury out on ED's Native Hawaiians program

The Education for Native Hawaiians program is too new for evaluation or numerical assessments under the Education Department's fiscal 2006 Performance Plan. ED's overall objective for this program is:

- **To increase the percentage of teachers involved in professional development activities who address the unique education needs of program participants.** The target for fiscal 2004 was to set a baseline, and to increase that baseline by 5 percent in 2005 and by another 1 percent in 2006.

*The evaluation is available at [www.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/2006plan/edlite-g2eseaeducation.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/2006plan/edlite-g2eseaeducation.html).*

### Across the Nation

#### Utah

#### Governor rejects bill that prohibits teachers from recommending medication for students

Gov. Jon Huntsman this week vetoed a bill that would have prohibited school staff from recommending psychiatric medications, treatments or evaluations for students.

While many supported the proposal from state Rep. Michael Morley, who said his bill would encourage parental involvement in the decisions to medicate their own children, several parents worried the proposal was too restrictive (ED, March 9).

So did the governor, who feared the bill would unnecessarily limit communication between teachers and parents. "Ultimately, decisions concerning a child's behavior and solutions for any problems should be made by that child's parents or guardians," Huntsman wrote in a letter to legislators. "In making decisions about a child's behavior, however, parents and guardians should have unhindered access to input from teachers."

*To read Huntsman's letter to lawmakers, see [www.utah.gov/governor](http://www.utah.gov/governor).*

#### Montana

#### State has failed to provide 'quality' education for all students, high court rules

The Montana Supreme Court has elaborated on a brief, three-page order it issued in November, when it declared the state's education funding system unconstitutional.

In *Columbia Falls Elementary Sch. Dist. No. 6, et al. v. State of Montana*, No. 04-390 (Mont. 03/22/05), the court ruled that the state has not provided a "quality" education as called for in the constitution, but it left the definition of "quality" to the legislature.

The decision is a validation of the challenging districts, which convinced the court that most in Montana are either exceeding their maximum budgets, or using as much as 98 percent of what the state has determined, under a preset formula, they can spend.

The court also said that, despite the current lack of a state definition of quality, "the educational product of the present school system is constitutionally deficient" and the legislature "currently fails to adequately fund Montana's public school system."

*The entire decision is available at [www.lawlibrary.state.mt.us/dscgi/ds.py/View/Collection-11124](http://www.lawlibrary.state.mt.us/dscgi/ds.py/View/Collection-11124).*

#### Schools to use natural resource for heating

Five Montana communities received grants for the Fuels for Schools program, according to U.S. Sen. Conrad Burns, R-Montana. The combined amount of the grants, which comes from the Fiscal 2005 appropriations package, is \$1.29 million.

The goal of the program is to promote and encourage the use of wood biomass as a natural resource that provides a clean, readily available energy source suitable for heating public and private buildings, including schools.

The school districts in Troy and Townsend plan to install boilers that burn pellets that are partially made of logging slash and the byproducts of forest thinning projects. The districts hope to have the new systems operational by November.

The Fuels for Schools program is a joint effort by the state and private branches of the Forest Service, state foresters and local communities.

#### New York

#### Superintendent resists military recruiting push

Two years ago, William Cala, superintendent of Fairport Central School District, received a thank-you letter from an Army recruiter.

Now, a colonel is expected to visit Cala, possibly in early April, to try to convince him to allow the military more access to student information.

The No Child Left Behind Act requires districts to release student directory information unless parents sign a waiver. But Cala is doing the reverse — only releasing the information of those students whose parents sign a form granting recruiters access.

Cala yesterday said he has not yet heard a specific date for the colonel's visit, but he expects it will happen.

"I expect that they are no longer 'thankful,'" he said.

Because Fairport is considered out of compliance with the military recruiting requirement, the district warrants a visit from a military officer who is at least at the

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rank of colonel. If the district still does not comply, the governor can visit, followed by a notification of Congress.

Districts that do not comply could lose their federal funding, which could be “perhaps a couple of million” dollars for Title I and special education, Cala said.

“We could not afford to lose the aid,” he said. “However, we will fight this by every legal means.”

### Study Hall

#### Harvard report confronts California racial gap

Researchers from the Civil Rights Project (CRP) at Harvard University sharply criticized California’s formula for calculating graduation rates, reporting it clashes with national data.

While the state reports a graduation rate of 86.9 percent under the National Center for Education Statistics formula, the project reported Wednesday that a more commonly used Cumulative Promotion Index, which tracks 9th-grade students, puts the state’s rate at 71 percent, well below the national average. That rate, moreover, does not detail the much lower graduation rates for minority and disadvantaged students.

CRP analysts reported 64 percent of central city students graduate with regular diplomas. In racially segregated school districts, 65 percent of students graduate, and the graduation rate falls to 58 percent in socioeconomically segregated districts.

*For more information, see [www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu](http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu). To view the graduation rate data, see the ETS report One Third of a Nation: Rising Dropout Rates and Declining Opportunities at [www.ets.org/research](http://www.ets.org/research).*

#### Education may prevent memory loss in aged

Continuing education may help the brain combat the loss of memory as people age, a new study says.

Researchers at the University of Toronto compared 21 volunteers ages 18 to 30 and 29 volunteers ages 65 and older on a series of memory tests and brain scans.

The study showed older participants who had several years of higher education had more brain activity in the frontal lobe, known as a center of recognition and problem-solving. They also performed better on the recognition tests than their less-educated peers.

Less-educated young participants had to exert more energy, the brain scans showed, to perform the memory tests than did their educated peers.

The study showed education may help the brain develop multiple memory strategies, which can help offset memory ailments such as Alzheimer’s disease.

The Relation Between Brain Activity During Memory Tasks and Years of Education in Young and Older Adults is available in the March issue of *Neuropsychology*, a journal published by the American Psychological Association.

#### High-stakes testing leads to cheating and low teacher morale, according to new study

Overreliance on high-stakes testing has negative repercussions, according to a new study from Arizona State University.

The drawbacks to high-stakes testing, which schools use for employment status, student promotion or graduation, federal funding and more, include: teacher and student cheating; exclusion of low-performance students from testing; misrepresentation of student dropouts; teaching to the test; narrowing of the curriculum; conflicting accountability ratings; questions about the meaning of proficient; declining teacher morale; and score reporting errors, according to the study. Researchers used news articles, traditional research, studies and stories from educators to reach their conclusions.

The Inevitable Corruption of Indicators and Educators Through High-Stakes Testing is available at [www.greatlakescenter.org/pdf/EPSTL-0503-101-EPRU.pdf](http://www.greatlakescenter.org/pdf/EPSTL-0503-101-EPRU.pdf).

### Newsmaker

#### PPI’s Marshall named to D.C. charter board

D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams has named Will Marshall, president and founder of the Progressive Policy Institute, to the Washington, D.C., Public Charter School Board.

The Public Charter School Board, created in 1906, currently oversees 26 D.C. public charter schools, serving more than 15,500 children.

Marshall’s role on the board will be to help develop and empower the city’s current charter schools and help reform the D.C. public school system through the authorization of additional charter schools.

Marshall helped found the Democratic Leadership Council, serving as its first policy director. In that capacity, he worked with members of Congress and other elected officials around the country.

*For more information, go to [www.ppionline.org/ndol/print.cfm?contentid=253251](http://www.ppionline.org/ndol/print.cfm?contentid=253251).*

### Resources

#### Motorola recycling program goes nationwide

Motorola Inc., has expanded its Race to Recycle pilot program, in which it pays schools \$3 each for recycled obsolete mobile phones.

The pilot, launched in September, has received positive feedback from participants because collecting old handheld devices is relatively easy when compared to stockpiling newspapers and aluminum cans, the company said.

Accredited K-12 schools can earn up to \$21,000 per year by turning in mobile phones. One Illinois school has already raised \$1,500, which it used to buy overhead projectors.

*Schools can register for the program at [www.motorola.com/racetorecycle](http://www.motorola.com/racetorecycle).*