



Editor's Note

What's New ?

- From the U.S.
- Department of Education
- American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
- From the Institute of
- Education Sciences
- American History
- Arts Education
- Charter Schools/Choice
- Closing the Achievement Gap
- School Improvement
- Technology in Education

Innovations in the News

- Leadership
- Raising Student Achievement
- School Improvement
- STEM
- Teacher Quality and Development
- Technology in Education

Purpose

Contributors

Disclaimer

Editor's Note

This is the final edition of *The Education Innovator* for 2009, and one that differs a little from previous ones. While we don't have a feature article this month, both the "What's New" and "Innovations in the News" sections are chock full of important announcements and insightful reports, policy and program developments both at the Department and in the field, and news articles. We hope all of this both informs and better prepares you to tackle the challenges we together face in 2010 to make America's schools the best they can be for all of our students.

The Education Innovator will be published again on January 28th with a feature article about an exciting addition to the Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund, and before that next edition, we anticipate that the final i3 application will be made public. Don't miss this important development by visiting the Department of Education's [home page](#) with the start of the New Year.

What's New ?

From the U.S. Department of Education

The Race is on! On Nov. 12, Secretary Arne Duncan [released](#) the final application for the [Race to the Top Fund](#) (RTT), which will reward states that have raised student performance and have the capacity to accelerate achievement gains with innovative reforms. The final application includes significant changes to the proposal from the Department in July. After reviewing responses to the draft proposal from 1,161 people, the Department restructured the application and changed it to reflect the ideas of the public. The Department will hold two rounds of competition for these grants. (Nov. 2009)

Earlier in November, in anticipation of the RTT application release, President Obama and Secretary Duncan visited James C. Wright Middle School in Madison, Wis., where they outlined the [high expectations](#) for Race to the Top. "We're putting over



President Barack Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan met with students of James C. Wright Middle School in Madison, Wis., on November 4, to discuss plans for the Race to the Top Fund. (Official White House photo)

\$4 billion on the table, one of the largest investments that the federal government has ever made in education reform," the President explained. "But we're not just handing it out to states.... We're staying to states, if you're committed to real change in the way you educate your children, if you're willing to hold yourselves more accountable, and if you develop a strong plan to improve the quality of education in your state, then we'll offer you a big grant to help you make that plan a reality..." (Nov. 2009)

While acknowledging the influence that the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) has had on President Obama and his Administration's plans for the Promise Neighborhoods initiative, Secretary Duncan [addressed](#) the HCZ's fall conference, posing the question: "How can government, non-profits, and community organizations successfully apply the core concepts of the Harlem Children's Zone?" The President "wants Promise Neighborhoods to build that seamless continuum of support and services for low-income children, from cradle to career," the Secretary noted, and to "break the cradle-to-prison pipeline that plagues so many poverty-stricken neighborhoods today." (Nov. 2009)

In his [remarks](#) before the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's annual Education and Workforce Summit, Secretary Duncan addressed a wide range of topics, such as the federal role in education, the compelling case for reforming education at every level (featuring a range of important indicators), and the core ideas that are

central to reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. “I believe that the quality of our education system says as much about the long-term health of our economy as the stock market, the unemployment rate, and the size of the gross domestic product,” he stated. (Nov. 2009)

Eight public school principals received the [Terrel H. Bell Award](#) for Outstanding School Leadership at the 2009 Blue Ribbon Schools Award Ceremony, in Washington, D.C. Named for the former U.S. Secretary of Education, the award recognizes outstanding school leaders whose “vision and collaborative leadership styles have produced outstanding results for all their students regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.” (Nov. 2009)

Viewers of “Education News Parents Can Use” take special note: The show did not broadcast during the originally scheduled time in November. Instead, on Tuesday, **Dec. 15, from 2:00-3:00 p.m.** (ET), U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan will host a special national town hall forum with students to discuss what is working and what needs improvement in our nation’s schools. During the live broadcast, Secretary Duncan will take comments and questions from students in the studio audience and others throughout the nation via telephone and e-mail. The conversation will focus on improving the quality of student’s educational experiences, their aspirations for college and future careers, contributions to civic life through volunteer service, and critical influences on young people’s decision-making and academic choices. Click [here](#) to see viewing options for this live broadcast. To watch archived versions of past broadcasts, go to <http://www.connective.com/events/ednews>. (Nov. 2009)



Your vote is needed! Following President Obama’s challenge to America’s students to take responsibility for their education, more than 600 students submitted videos about the importance of education in the “I Am What I Learn” contest. The Department has chosen the top 10 videos and now we need your help to select the top winners, each of which will receive a \$1,000 prize. The criteria are use of creativity, strength of content, and ability to inspire. To vote on your favorites, go to <http://www.ed.gov/iamwhatilearn/index.html> by **Friday, Dec. 4.**

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

As of September 30, 2009, the Department of Education awarded more than \$67 billion in formula grants under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), according to a [report](#) issued on Oct. 30. These education stimulus funds resulted in the saving or creation of roughly 400,000 jobs. Of those, 325,000 are education jobs; the remaining portion is attributable to general public service positions. The report also contains a profile of each state that summarizes any restoration of education budgets by ARRA funds per program and compiles all reported information regarding the state’s use of ARRA funds per program. (Oct. 2009)

From the Institute of Education Sciences

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) has launched a [newsletter](#) to provide information on its programs, services, and publications. The November edition reports on the latest on research initiatives from John Easton, recently sworn-in as IES director, and news from the four centers of IES. Other items in “Education Research News” include an update on the 2010 research conference, a link to the new financial aid calculator, and new staff introductions. (Nov. 2009)

American History

K-12 history, social studies, and English teachers are invited to apply to the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History 2010 [Summer Seminars](#). Taught by renowned historians on college campuses in the U.S. and the U.K., these one-week seminars give educators the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of topics in American history, while gaining practical resources and strategies to take back to their classrooms. The application deadline is mid-February, but interested teachers are encouraged to apply early since seminar space is limited. (Nov. 2009)

Arts Education

First Lady Michelle Obama, honorary chair of the President's Committee on Arts and the Humanities, presented 15 programs from around the world with the [Coming Up Taller Award](#). Bestowed to arts and humanities organizations that reach underserved youth, the award is a reminder of the meaningful role of cultural activities in the lives of children. This year's recipients include the Shakespeare Remix program in New York City, where inner-city teens adapt and perform Shakespearean texts to reflect their lives, and the Harmony Project in Los Angeles, which provides free music instruction to at-risk children. (Oct. 2009)

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills brings together the business community, education leaders, and policymakers to define a vision for 21st century education centered on the skills needed to be effective citizens, workers, and leaders. The arts – dance, music, theatre, and visual arts – are included as core subjects within the Partnership's Framework for 21st Century Learning. America's leading professional organizations for educators in these disciplines are involved in a project with the Partnership to demonstrate how an education in the arts develops essential 21st century skills. Writers for this project have drafted an "Arts Skills Map," which is a document to be read and understood by all those interested in the arts as a part of a full, balanced education. The writers are [inviting comments](#) on the Skills Map. All comments must be submitted by Friday, Dec. 11, 2009. (Nov. 2009)

The [National Task Force on Arts in Education](#) (NTFAE), comprised of leading educators and artists, was created by The College Board in 2008 to address the opportunities and challenges facing arts education in the U.S. The NTFAE advises the College Board by recommending strategies for placing the arts at the core of elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education. The [NTFAE's report](#), "Arts at the Core: Recommendations for Advancing the State of Arts Education in the 21st Century," confronts challenges to the state of the arts in education, identifies the many benefits of arts learning, and details key recommendations for advancing the place of the arts in American education. (Nov. 2009)

The [Southeast Center for Education in the Arts](#), located at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, applies an extensive knowledge of arts-based pedagogy to interdisciplinary professional development, creating integrated instructional strategies and curriculum that promote deep understanding through concept-based connections at the nexus of the arts and other disciplines. The report of its 2009 annual spring forum, "Arts Integration and Teacher Change," containing session accounts, lessons learned, and participants' ideas and questions, can be downloaded from the Center's Web site. (Oct. 2009)

High school graduation rates in New York City and access to arts education are closely linked, according to a [new study](#) by the Center for Arts Education (CAE). Using data from the city schools, CAE researchers determined that high schools in the top third of graduation rates had almost 40 percent more certified arts teachers as well as the same percentage more of dedicated instructional space for the arts than schools in the bottom third. "The findings strongly suggest that arts play a key role in keeping students in high school and graduating on time," according to CAE's executive director, Richard Kessler. (Nov. 2009)

Charter Schools/Choice

Public charter schools now enroll more than one in five public school students in 14 communities, according to a new [report](#) from the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS). “Chartering is becoming a key component of the public education delivery system,” said NAPCS president and CEO Nelson Smith, adding that charter schools are working at scale in a growing number of American cities. In New Orleans, where charters serve 57% of students, they are also the highest performing sector of public schools in the city. (Oct. 2009)

Charter schools in New York City are succeeding in closing the achievement gap with students attending schools in wealthy suburbs of the city, according to a new [study](#). The study’s author, Caroline Hoxby of Stanford University and director of the Economics of Education Program for the National Bureau of Economic Research, used a random-assignment approach to compare the performance of students selected by lotteries into charter schools and those who applied to the lotteries, lost, and stayed in their traditional public schools. (Sept. 2009)

Closing the Achievement Gap

In another report on increasing the number of students graduating high school, the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) investigated the links between students at risk of dropping out, their families, and the communities in which they live. “[Partners in Prevention: Community Partnerships in Dropout Prevention](#)” calls for implementing comprehensive dropout prevention plans that include a strong school-community component to reach struggling students. The NASBE study group found that state school boards are in a unique position to help local districts and schools work together with governmental agencies, businesses, and associations to craft solutions to the dropout crisis. (Nov. 2009)

Failure to graduate high school, run-ins with the criminal justice system, and poor physical fitness are the subject of a report on America’s 17 to 24-year olds from MSSION: READINESS, a group comprised of retired military leaders, including former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan joined members of the group on November 5th to release “[Ready, Willing and Unable to Serve](#),” and he stressed the critical role that early childhood education plays in later school completion and success. (Nov. 2009)

School Improvement

A [new report](#) from the Rural School and Community Trust, “Why Rural Matters 2009: State and Regional Challenges and Opportunities,” analyzes the contexts and conditions of rural education in the 50 states and calls attention to the need for policymakers to address rural education issues in their respective states. The intent of the report, according to the Trust, is not to compare states’ progress, but rather to highlight priority policy needs and to describe the complexity of rural contexts to enable better policy responses. (Nov. 2009)

The U.S. Chamber of commerce released the second in its “[Leaders and Laggards](#)” series of state report cards. The report cards examine the 50 states and the District of Columbia in the following eight categories: school management; finance; staffing: hiring and evaluation; staffing: removing ineffective teachers; data; pipeline to postsecondary; technology; and state-reform environments. Overall, the states posted mediocre results, and, across all the categories, not a single state earned top grades in more than one or two areas. (Nov. 2009)

The Center for American Progress, in a new [report on community schools](#), cites England as a “model for the nationwide spread of community schools, which offer a venue for both academics and social services.” The report, titled “A Look at Community Schools,” provides an overview of community school strategies in the U.S., highlights research findings about the effectiveness of community schools, and discusses a number of lessons from successful community schools initiatives nationwide. (Oct. 2009)

Technology in Education

You no doubt know and associate the name Joan Ganz Cooney with Sesame Workshop and thus with the revolutionary role of television as a tool for children's learning begun four decades ago. Fast forward to 2009, and think about what ubiquitous communications tool has that same potential today – the cell phone and mobile technologies. It's very fitting then that the Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop has released "[Pockets of Potential](#)," a report on instructional applications for mobile technologies and the factors that help or constrain their use for learning. (Nov. 2009)

Innovations in the News

Leadership

The average tenure for elementary and middle school principals in Texas is just under five years and closer for three years for high school principals in that state, according to a study of more than 16,000 Texas principals by researchers at the University of Texas. Despite the fact that research indicates that principals, second only to teachers, may have the most influence on student learning, there are no nationwide studies about principal turnover and longevity. Aside from Texas, state-specific studies in a few other states – including Illinois, Missouri, New York, and North Carolina – provide limited insight on this subject. [More—[Education Week](#)] (Oct. 28) (*premium article access compliments of EdWeek.org*)

Raising Student Achievement

Elementary schools and teachers in Memphis have joined a small group of other districts that are experimenting with the use of departmentalization or "platooning," in which students change classrooms in order to learn from teachers who specialize in one or a few subjects, often dividing up elementary instruction in English language arts from math and science. The concept has been in place in the Denver and Palm Beach County Public Schools and other districts that constitute an estimated 20 percent of elementary schools nationwide. While research on the effectiveness of platooning is unclear at this point, Palm Beach County's Chief Academic Officer Jeffrey Hernandez sees it as a way to allow "teachers to become an expert in the field they are teaching" and to maximize available resources "to ensure teacher effectiveness." [More—[Harvard Education Letter](#)] (Nov. 1)

Students at 14 middle schools in Las Vegas get their sights set on college early on, thanks to the Crossroads program of the Nevada State College (NSC). Now in its third year, the program works with guidance counselors who identify up to 15 at-risk students who meet with their peers and NSC officials four times a year. At the annual kick-off meeting, NSC President Fred Maryanski hands out certificates that guarantee \$500 scholarships to NSC, contingent upon them graduating from high school. In its first year, 77 percent of the participating students showed improvement in grades, attendance, or behavior. Recently, college mentors were added to provide one-on-one assistance, for which the NSC students receive a stipend and opportunity for community service. [More— The [Las Vegas Sun](#)] (Nov. 6)

School Improvement

The Ford Foundation is investing \$100 million to transform urban high schools in seven cities. The initiative, which is expected to run seven years, will support research and reform in "teacher quality, student assessment, a longer school day and year, and school funding," and is intended, according to the foundation president Luis Ubiñas, "to shake up the conversations surrounding school reform and help spur some truly imaginative thinking and partnerships." The seven cities are Los Angeles, New York, Newark, N.J., Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, and Denver. [More—The [Los Angeles Times](#)] (Nov. 5)

A recent NAEP Assessment in the arts revealed that the number of eighth graders visiting art museums on field trips had declined to 16 percent nationally, and this decline appears to be true for field trips generally, according to a recent survey by the American Association of School Administrators. The survey found that 17 percent of schools plan to eliminate field trips this year, an increase of eight percent over last year. To fill the gap, schools are increasingly turning to parents and local businesses, such as Target, which is giving

5,000 local grants this year to support field trips. [More—The [Wall Street Journal](#)] (Oct. 29)

Anticipating that common core standards will be completed and ready next year, several states have either stopped work on or reduced the pace of the revisions to their standards for English/language arts or mathematics. Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, and Pennsylvania have halted their efforts, anticipating that the standards being developed under the aegis of the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) will inform their own revisions. According to a CCSSO survey, at least 12 states are expected to adopt the common standards in the half year following their release, and another 15 could be ready to adopt them within a year. [More—[Education Week](#)] (Nov. 6) (*premium article access compliments of EdWeek.org*)

Parents in Los Angeles have new power in school reform, including the ability to call for use of outside management in schools in need of improvement. The “parent trigger,” which has met with opposition from local teachers unions, is part of a set of new rules released last month by Los Angeles Superintendent Ramon C. Cortines. A concern for the unions is the potential for parents of children not yet attending a school to vote on the trigger. The larger set of regulations are in response to the school board’s approval of a school choice policy that targets some 250 schools that are slated for new management because of poor performance or that will newly open in the next four years. [More—The [Los Angeles Times](#)] (Oct. 28)

STEM

According to new study on the availability of math and science students in postsecondary education and the workplace, America has a sufficient supply of potential STEM candidates. The break in the pipeline is “among the top high school and postsecondary students...who choose other studies and occupations,” according to researchers at Georgetown and Rutgers Universities. Among the factors that may be causing highly qualified students to steer away from the math and science fields, the research suggests, are perceptions of higher pay, more prestige, and greater stability in other areas such as law, health care, and business. The study was supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. [More—[Education Week](#)] (Oct. 28) (*premium article access compliments of EdWeek.org*)

An all-girls engineering club at Calvert Middle School in Prince Frederick, Md., is helping to counter the stereotype of “older men who build bridges,” that many young women have, according to a school sponsor of the club. It is part of a district effort to get students interested in careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics that is supported by the STEM Education Coalition, which includes representatives from government, businesses, and higher education. Weekly club activities are usually hands-on and often involve female role models from area public agencies such as the National Museum of the U.S. Navy. [More—The [Washington Post](#)] (Nov. 12)

Students from rural America are becoming more aware of the potential of wind power and of careers in the wind industry, thanks to a program of the U.S. Department of Energy. Wind for Schools is installing small wind turbines at rural elementary and secondary schools and helping to develop K-12 curriculum for local schools. The objectives of the program, according to Larry Flowers of the Wind Powering America National Renewable Energy Laboratory, include “equip(ping) college students in wind energy applications and education to provide the growing wind industry with interested, equipped engineers.” [More—[KearneyHub.com \(Neb.\)](#)] (Nov. 11)

In Oregon, middle school math teachers are finding that “less is more” is an effective way to increase achievement. Anticipating the implementation of new state math standards scheduled for next year, teachers in several districts are getting an early start with a four-prong strategy that calls for greater focus on fewer topics at each grade level. The other parts are going deeper with hands-on engagement by students, use of pretests and post-tests to gauge understanding, and more teacher collaboration to identify weaknesses in instruction and learn from one another. Early results are promising, with eighth graders doing math at the level of some sophomores in the state. [More—[The Oregonian \(Portland\)](#)] (Nov.7)

Teacher Quality and Development

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded \$290 million to three urban districts and five charter networks in Los Angeles to fund experiments in tenure, evaluation, compensation, training, and mentoring. The initiative will also include a \$45 million investment in a study of teacher effectiveness. The strategy, according to Melinda Gates, is to "...focus on the things that actually matters the most, which is the teacher." The districts receiving the funds are Hillsborough County, Fla., Memphis, and Pittsburgh. [More—[The Washington Post](#)] (Nov. 20)

An education task force charged with looking at the needed improvements in teacher recruitment and preparation, evaluation, and compensation has issued a set of 20 policy recommendations for state- and district-level policymakers "aimed at improving the teaching corps in the nation's 100 largest school districts," along with some recommendations focused on the increasing the effectiveness of principals. Among other things, the report, "Taking Human Capital Seriously," calls for state-level adoption of a multi-tiered licensing system and performance-based evaluation and pay measures for both teachers and principals. [More—[Education Week](#)] (Nov. 11) (*premium article access compliments of EdWeek.org*)

"GenY" teachers may be more in favor of merit-pay plans than their older counterparts, according to a survey by Public Agenda and Learning Point Associates. Seventy-one percent of teachers who are 32 or younger strongly or somewhat favored merit pay for teachers who "consistently work harder, putting in more time and effort than other teachers." Of the older teachers surveyed, only 63 percent were in favor of such a differentiation in pay. [More—[Education Week](#)] (Nov. 11) (*premium article access compliments of EdWeek.org*)

Rowan University's College of Education is partnering with the Camden and Bridgeton school districts to establish residencies for five graduate students next year. The program will target math, science, and Spanish. The residency teachers will get six months of classroom preparation beginning in January, and will receive a masters degree in education at the conclusion of the residency year. This program and similar ones at William Paterson and Kean Universities are supported by a federal grant. [More—[The Philadelphia Inquirer](#)] (Nov. 2)

Technology in Education

Interest in online learning is growing in Yakima, Wash., where Yakima Online! is in its third year, offering an alternative to the district's brick-and-mortar middle and high schools. From four students who graduated in 2007, Yakima Online! expects to graduate up to 40 students this year. The online option is free to students and serves a range of students who fall behind in traditional school settings, including former dropouts, as well as accelerated learners and some who were formerly home schooled. [More—[Education Week](#)] (Nov. 2) (*premium article access compliments of EdWeek.org*)

Florida Virtual School (FVS), a national leader in online learning, may be the first such provider to offer a game-based, credit-bearing high school course. "Conspiracy Code," developed by FVS in collaboration with Orlando-based 360Ed, features character assignments that students take on to "interrogate and eliminate conspiracy agents, filling out logs detailing what they found, and then write a speech for the mayor explaining the truth to the public." More than 200 students are involved in piloting the new course, which is instructed by Tennessee history teacher David Wilson, who sees himself as more a handler than instructor, helping students to "avoid the pitfalls of gaming that might hinder the learning experience." [More—[The St. Petersburg Times](#)] (Nov. 2)

As educators begin to embrace video games for instruction, a new generation of video games is adapting to the needs of the classroom and subjects like science, math, and history. Helping the games to move from extracurricular endeavors to the educational mainstream is a combination of academics, private foundations, and enterprising start-ups that include Quest to Learn, a New York City public school that uses game-based learning. With "Gamestar Mechanic," developed with support from the MacArthur Foundation, Quest to Learn students "use physics concepts to figure out how to get two players to arrive at the same point at the

same time.” [More—[The New York Times](#)] (Nov. 1)

Purpose

The purpose of the U.S. Department of Education’s online newsletter *The Education Innovator* is to promote innovative practices in education; to offer features on promising programs and practices; to provide information on innovative research, schools, policies, and trends; and to keep readers informed of key Department priorities and activities. The Department’s Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII) is responsible for the newsletter’s research, writing, and production.

James H. Shelton III, Assistant Deputy Secretary, Office of Innovation and Improvement, sponsors *The Education Innovator*, which is published up to 10 months annually.

Contributors

Doug Herbert
Editor

Cynthia Cabell
Senior Production Editor

Dramon Turner
Production Editor

Emily Archer
Copy Editor

Doug Herbert
Dean Kern
Andrew Lee
Jose Rodriquez
Issue Reviewers

Disclaimer

The Education Innovator contains links to Web sites and news articles. We believe these links provide relevant information as part of the continuing discussion of education improvement. These links represent just a few examples of the numerous education reference materials currently available to the public. Some of the news items may require both paid and unpaid subscriptions. The opinions expressed in any of these articles or Web pages do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OII or the Department. The inclusion of resources should not be construed or interpreted as an endorsement by the Department of any private organization or business listed herein.

Please send questions, comments, and suggestions to [The Innovator Webmasters](#).