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Editor's Note

In this back-to-school issue, schools that are innovating to meet high expectations despite the challenging economic times – doing more with less – are featured. In this month's "Special Report," Secretary of Education Arne Duncan salutes those responsible for the "quiet revolution" that is rebuilding public education. The "What's New?" section is beyond its normal size this month to accommodate the many developments, particularly at the Department of Education, since the June issue. You will also notice that the topics in the "Innovations in the News" section now align with the four assurances in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Going forward, we will report on local developments associated with these important national priorities as well as in others our readers are used to seeing, such as STEM, as space permits.

Feature

***Innovating to Meet High Expectations in Challenging Times***

This month, school districts nationwide are renewing their commitment to high student achievement for all children and to doing their part to reach the national goal of returning the United States to Number 1 in the world in postsecondary completion by 2020. And many, if not most, are recommitting to this important goal amid the most challenging fiscal circumstances they and the country have faced in decades. Despite gradual improvement in the economy, pre-K-12 education public funding levels will be flat or down for several years. Thus, school districts continue to pursue ambitious reform agendas by using innovative strategies that allow them to "do more with less."

Districts and schools are taking bold steps to accelerate progress in closing achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, and increase the number of students prepared for and entering higher education. In the words of Education Secretary Arne Duncan, they are part of a "quiet revolution" of educators who are "challenging the defeatism and inertia

that has trapped generations of children in second-rate schools," and are doing it despite the current economic constraints.

Specifically, districts are pursuing several strategies that are showing promise: (1) rethinking resource allocations; (2) leveraging community resources; (3) taking advantage of technology; and (4) partnering for success and savings.

*Rethinking Resource Allocations*

Traditional cost structures and spending patterns do not focus resources on the key priorities, such as raising student achievement, improving teacher quality, and turning around low-performing schools, according to [Education Resource Strategies](#) (ERS), a nonprofit specializing in strategic planning, organization, and resource allocation in urban school districts. States need to overhaul "antiquated cost structures and operating models that undergird most school systems," and "get into the game of restructuring the use of existing resources ... not simply adding resources on top," contend Karen Hawley Miles and Karen Baroody, ERS's executive director and managing director, respectively, in a recent

**"If states want to promote school systems that succeed at scale, they must get in the game of restructuring the use of existing resources for system-wide transformation – not simply adding resources on top."**

— Karen Hawley Miles and Karen Baroody, Education Resource Strategies

[Education Week commentary](#). By focusing on equity, transparency, and flexibility, schools, districts, and states can both drive better results and make their operations more efficient.

In many districts, budget time is characterized by making minor adjustments to the previous year's budget, and the budgeting process is divorced from school planning. In [The Strategic School: Making the Most of People, Time, and Money](#), Miles and co-author Stephen Frank cite courage and persistence as essential for transformational change: courage to set priorities and “say that some things are more important than others,” and persistence to overcome “a host of regulations, contractual provisions, and district practices [that] combine to thwart changes in school organization.”

From its efforts helping urban districts strategically reallocate their resources to improve student performance over the past decade, ERS has defined a comprehensive framework of seven Core Transformational Strategies that support high-performing schools. [ResourceCheck™ Tool](#), a questionnaire available online from ERS, is designed to help school districts determine how they are currently organizing their key resources – people, time, and money – to support high-performing schools.

### *Leveraging Community Resources*

Many schools and school systems have a history of leveraging and integrating public and private community resources to meet students and schools' needs and broaden students' opportunities. By ensuring students are ready to learn, filling key gaps in school supports and services, and adding onto/wrapping around the core school day and year, these community resources not only improve the opportunity for every child to learn, but they also allow every dollar of schools' budgets to go that much further.

The [Coalition for Community Schools](#), comprised of 142 local, state, and national organizations in both the public and private sectors, reminds us that the learning needs of students do not begin at 7:30 a.m. or end at 3:30 p.m.; nor are those needs fully met within the school walls.

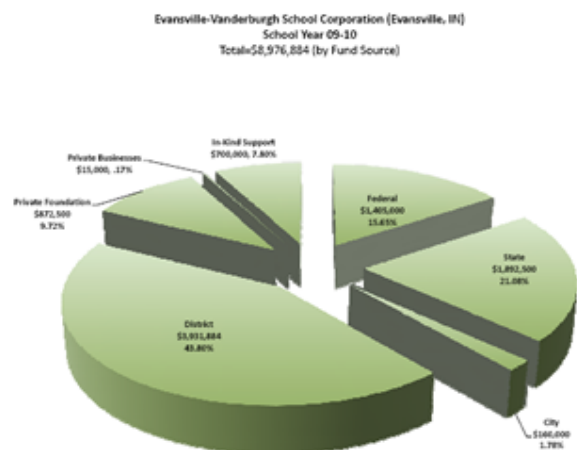
Strong and purposeful, results-focused partnerships with community-based organizations, families, and other community members are at the heart of the Coalition's Agenda. Partners participating in the community school strategy represent a wide array of community sectors and institutions that influence positive outcomes for children and youth. Community schools across the nation are blending funding sources to ensure that the needed services are brought to bear on not only the school-day experiences of the students, but also learning opportunities beyond the regular school hours for students and their families.

In Indiana, the [Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation](#) (EVSC), with more than 22,000 students in 38 schools, is committed to a district-wide community school system, which resulted from the combining of four influences: the institutionalization of the community schools philosophy by school leaders; the creation of a [School-Community Council](#), a supportive network of community agencies; and the leveraging of federal, state, and local resources.

Federal funds from Title I, IDEA, Early Head Start, and Head Start as well as grants from the state level are strategically combined with local public and private funds and in-kind services to help EVCS to achieve its mission to provide “equity and excellence for all students.”

### [The Center for Family, School, and Community](#)

[Partnerships](#), which houses programs and services that support families, parents, and students, is itself a metaphor for the combining of public and private resources. The Center is home to EVSC's associate superintendent who oversees the community schools initiative as well as to a number of community partners that provide services and programs, and the building is provided by Old National Bancorp. The center represents the



A “blended” resource strategy – one that involves public as well as private sources of cash and in-kind support – makes the district-wide community school system in the Evansville-Vanderburgh Schools possible.

intentionality with which the school district and its many partners are, in the words of EVSC Superintendent Vincent Bertram, “meeting our children’s academic, social, emotional, and health needs as a shared responsibility.” The partnerships that the Center represents are “at the core of our district’s strategic plan,” according to Superintendent Bertram.

An ongoing evaluation of student performance in Evansville shows increases in attendance and graduation rates. Students who have participated in afterschool and summer programs for more than 30 days have higher reading and math grades and fewer absences than students who either did not participate or did so only infrequently.

Surrounding students, especially those at risk of dropping out, with a community of support has been the mission of another nationwide schools network for more than 30 years. In more than 3,000 schools in half of the states and the District of Columbia, [Communities In Schools](#) (CIS), a national nonprofit that is focused on preventing school dropouts by working with schools through its network of more than 200 affiliates, helped to keep 97 percent of the students it monitors as potential dropouts in school. CIS’s comprehensive approach to dropout prevention is all about leveraging existing resources. The approach surrounds students – 96 percent of whom are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals – with a range of community-based interventions, coordinated by a CIS staff member in each of the partner schools. “Our affiliates apply the evidence-based program that we’ve developed and honed over the past 30 years, adapting the program to meet local needs and goals,” notes CIS president Dan Cardinali.

More than 15,000 CIS community partners in 2008-09 generated 2.5 million volunteer service hours, estimated at a value of more than \$51 million. These in-kind contributions, combined with more than \$150 million in grants, mostly from the state and local levels, allowed the CIS affiliates to directly serve 1.3 million students at an average per-student cost of \$192. Most impressively, according to its [annual report](#), CIS achieved these results while grappling with declines in both its paid staff and volunteers due to the economic downturn. A combination of evidence-based programs and local flexibility, according to Cardinali, “made it possible for Communities in Schools to achieve greater results with fewer resources in 2009.”

### *Taking Advantage of Technology*

In his recent [remarks](#) to educators and school leaders from America’s rural communities, Secretary Duncan noted that “knowledge should have no boundaries.” With the continuing increases in online learning and virtual schools – 45 of the 50 states, plus Washington, D.C., have a state virtual school or online initiative, full-time online schools, or both, according to a 2009 report, [Keeping Pace with K-12 Online Learning](#) – access to knowledge via the Internet is becoming a mainstay of American schooling.

School district administrators recognize the efficiencies inherent in online learning, particularly when content or courses can be delivered more cost-efficiently than the traditional teacher-in-a-classroom model. The top three reasons K-12 district administrators cited for the importance of online and blended courses, according to the 2009 Sloan Consortium report, were “offering courses not otherwise available at the school, ... offering Advanced Placement or college-level courses, ... and meeting the needs of specific groups of students.”

A charter school network in the San Jose area, [Rocketship Education](#), uses a unique hybrid approach to online learning to meet the needs of its elementary-grade student population, 90 percent of whom are from low-income households and nearly three-quarters of whom are English language learners. Students attend regularly scheduled [Learning Lab](#) sessions during which individual learning needs are addressed. The daily lab sessions are surrounded by blocks of math/science and literacy/social studies instruction.

By using the Learning Lab, Rocketship administrators were able to reduce the number of total classroom teachers needed, freeing up \$500,000 annually that is used for several purposes, including teacher salaries that are 20 percent higher than surrounding districts, Response to Intervention (RTI), and principal training. Since the first school opened in 2007, Rocketship students have soared to top scores in both their school district and the state. The combined uses of technology, paraprofessionals, and personalizing instruction

through RTI is putting Rocketship Education “light years ahead of where everyone else is,” according to Don Shalvey, deputy director of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

### *Partnering for Success and Savings*

As schools and districts continue to tackle longstanding challenges, some are looking to new business models based on partnerships with specialized, sometimes nontraditional providers of services to supplement or substitute for existing school services. In a recent [working paper](#) for the American Enterprise Institute, “Shifting Risk to Create Opportunity: A Role for Performance Guarantees in Education,” Bryan Hassel and Daniela Doyle explore a variety of such guarantees – warranties, bonds, and performance contracts among them. Hassel and Doyle note that school districts, particularly in times of constrained budgets like the present, avoid the risks attendant to using nontraditional providers for a variety of reasons, including the uncertainty of results and fear of public reprisals if objectives aren’t achieved. Through the use of performance guarantees, which are quite common in other sectors, districts could reduce, if not completely eliminate, risks as well as realize efficiencies that could be gained through contracting arrangements.

A case in point is [AdvancePath Academics](#), a private provider of alternative education solutions for students who are disengaged or are at risk of dropping out of high school. Through public-private partnerships with districts nationwide, AdvancePath operates in-school Academies that provide high-quality education services addressing both the education and social needs of non-traditional learners. The curriculum is built on district and state standards and aligned with local graduation requirements, but learning is flexible with Academies operating year-round and students offered multiple sessions throughout the day and evening. Each student has a personalized learning plan based on individual needs.

AdvancePath Academics pays for all operating costs, from teacher and staff salaries to infrastructure to curriculum and instructional materials. The partnering district pays not more than the amount that it normally apportions for each student. Additionally, districts have an option of compensating AdvancePath only for students who attend the academies, an arrangement that is a win for the districts, the students, and the outside provider. This arrangement gives AdvancePath Academics an incentive to retain, educate, and graduate all students, and the partnering districts stay within their budgets while increasing their capacity to serve non-traditional students. Academy students find the approach to be a powerful, personalized option for staying in school, so much so that 90 percent of the students entering AdvancePath Academies either graduate high school or transfer to other schools to complete their studies or continue their studies with the academy on track for graduation.

### *Start the Engines*

In his remarks to state and local school leaders last August, Secretary Duncan challenged them, along with the U.S. Department of Education, to become “engines of innovation” in order to bring about the transformational change needed to reach the college-graduation goal set by President Obama. “The islands of excellence that now exist in schools districts have to become the norm,” he said, by “creating a culture of innovation and building the district-level systems needed to sustain a cycle of continuous improvement.”

A year later, despite the continued fiscal challenges that states and districts face, educators and their partners in the public and private sectors are either starting or accelerating their engines of innovation despite some declines in state and local education revenues. And others, like the community schools in Evansville or the charter schools of Rocketship Education, are leading the way by forging partnerships, finding cost-efficiencies with technology, or rethinking business relationships with outside providers to take proven strategies to scale.



## Key Resources

- [National Education Technology Plan 2010](#)
- [International Association for K-12 Online Learning](#)

## Correction

In the August *Innovator* feature, reference was made to the Student Tracker as a part of the New Visions for Public Schools project. The electronic system of the New Visions project is now known as the College Readiness Checker. The [case study](#) that describes this initiative has been updated to reflect this name change.

## Special Report

### Secretary Duncan Salutes “Quiet Revolution” in Education Reform

On July 27, in a [speech](#) at the National Press Club, Secretary Duncan saluted the education community for leading a “quiet revolution” of reform across the country. “From educators to parents and political leaders to journalists, there is a growing sense that a quiet revolution is underway in our homes and schools, classrooms, and communities,” he said. “This quiet revolution is driven by motivated parents who want better educational options for their children. It is driven by great educators and administrators who are challenging the defeatism and inertia that has trapped generations of children in second-rate schools. It is driven by elected officials and stakeholders outside the school system who value education enough to fund it adequately and give generously of their time, energy, and resources. It is driven by foundations and entrepreneurs that seed the fresh, new thinking that every sector of society needs in order to change and grow and improve.”

Among the reforms, the Secretary specifically praised the momentum for adopting rigorous academic standards (so far, 35 states and the District of Columbia have approved common core college- and career-ready standards), elevating the teaching profession to reward excellence, turning around low-performing schools, and building better data systems to inform reform. Of course, the bulk of the work is being done by governors, superintendents, and teachers, but the federal government is supporting their work through Race to the Top and other reform programs, including the Investing in Innovation Fund, School Improvement Grants, the Teacher Incentive Fund, and the charter school program.

Through all of these programs, the Department is distributing almost \$10 billion to support reform in states and communities. “As we look at the last 18 months, it is absolutely stunning to see how much change has happened...because of these incentive programs,” the Secretary concluded. “Recently, the President said that we can’t rebuild our economy on the same pile of sand. Similarly, we can’t rebuild public education on the same old system of rules and regulations. We have to change the rules, eliminate the excuses, and hold ourselves accountable.”

After his remarks, the Secretary [announced](#) that 18 states at the District of Columbia are finalists for \$3.4 billion available in the second round of the Race to the Top program: Arizona, California, Colorado, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and South Carolina. Thirty-five states and the District of Columbia applied for the second round of funding. The finalists are traveling to Washington, D.C., this month to present their plans to the peer reviewers who scored their applications. After the states’ presentations and an extended question-and-answer period, the peer reviewers will finalize their scores and comments. The Department intends to announce the winners of the competition in

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— Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

September.

In a [letter to governors](#), the Secretary congratulated the finalists. To others who applied, he applauded them for doing so and encouraged them to continue their work on meaningful reform. "The Department pledges to support you and your state in this work by sharing the lessons learned and the materials developed through Race to the Top, and by including you in relevant collaborative learning communities. In addition, as you are aware, President Obama has proposed \$1.35 billion for Race to the Top in his fiscal year 2011 budget. We hope to continue this program and its support of reform across the country." [Reprinted from August 6<sup>th</sup> *ED Review*]

#### What's New ?

From the U.S. Department of Education

An estimated 160,000 education jobs nationwide are expected to be saved with the enactment of legislation that was approved by the U.S. Senate and signed by President Barack Obama earlier this month. "With the support of the [jobs bill](#), these educators will be helping our children learn instead of looking for work," Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said. "This is the right thing to do for our children, for our teachers, and for our economy." The \$10 billion fund that the bill provides for schools will support education jobs in the 2010-11 school year and be distributed to states by a formula based on population figures. States can distribute their funding to school districts based on their own primary funding formula or districts' relative share of federal Title I funds. (August 2010)

President Obama delivered an [address](#) on education at the Urban League's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Convention highlighting the steps his Administration has taken over the past 18 months to improve the education system in America. The President stated that education reform is a top priority for his Administration because the "status quo is morally inexcusable, it's economically indefensible, and all of us are going to have to roll up our sleeves to change it." He also spotlighted the Race to the Top program, noting its support for teachers to help them be successful while still holding them accountable for results in the classroom. Education Secretary Duncan also [addressed](#) the Urban League's convention, where he promised to pursue federal policies to advance equity in the nation's public schools and indicated that he would form a new, bipartisan commission to examine educational equity. (July 2010)

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius [announced](#) the formation of the Early Learning Interagency Policy Board to improve the quality of early learning programs and outcomes for young children, increase the coordination of research, technical assistance, and data systems, and advance the effectiveness of the early learning workforce among the major federally funded early learning programs across the two departments. "This marks an important step in our effort to help eliminate silos at the federal level," said Secretary Duncan. "We want to ensure that collaboration at the federal level mirrors the integration you're striving to achieve at the state and local levels." (August 2010)

In July, 150 rural education stakeholders and technology experts from 26 states came together to learn from one another and provide critical feedback to federal leaders at the National Rural Education Technology [Summit](#) in Washington, D.C. Secretary Duncan convened the summit in partnership with Smithsonian Secretary G. Wayne Clough, who is aggressively seeking to increase student access to the wealth of content, resources, and scientists available via the Smithsonian Institution. The Secretary also enlisted Federal Communications Commission Chairman Julius Genachowski for this effort to challenge the country to rethink and redesign schools as broadband and other innovations come online. At the summit, Secretary Duncan announced the formation of an [Online Learning Registry](#) to provide access to priceless historical, artistic, and scientific primary source materials. (July 2010)

Also in July, the Secretary's [remarks](#) to the College Board Advanced Placement (AP) Conference addressed three widely-shared myths impeding the transformation of U.S. high schools: first, that setting higher standards and expectations for students will only lead more students to fail; second, that poverty is destiny; and third, that high school educators and counselors cannot really prepare students for college or careers because the concept of college- and career-readiness is itself too elusive to evaluate meaningfully with assessments or to track with longitudinal data systems. (July 2010)

Secretary Duncan [announced](#) the appointment of 15 teachers as Teaching Ambassador Fellows for the 2010-11 school year. Five have become full-time employees at the Department. The others are continuing as full-time teachers, while working as fellows part-time. Now in its third year, the [Teaching Ambassador Fellowship program](#) was created to give outstanding teachers an opportunity to participate in policy development and to contribute their expertise to those discussions. Fellows, in turn, share what they have learned about federal initiatives with other teachers in their districts and states, encouraging broader input into efforts to improve education at all levels of government. (July 2010)

The Department of Education launched Version 1.0 of [ED Data Express](#), an interactive website designed to increase the transparency of K-12 data collected by the agency by providing public access to high-value, state-level education data. The site presents data in a clear, easy-to-use manner, with a variety of tools to accommodate different types of users. Version 2.0, which will include data filtering tools, graphing tools, and mapping tools, as well as links to social networking sites, will be launched this winter. (August 2010)

#### From the Office of Innovation and Improvement

[Finalists](#) in the [Investing in Innovation](#) (i3) program, representing a cross-section of 49 school districts, nonprofit organizations, and institutions of higher education, were selected from among almost 1,700 applicants. According to OII Assistant Deputy Secretary Jim Shelton, “We were really struck by the number of high quality applicants and winners who were not among the usual suspects.” To receive a share of the \$650 million in i3 grants, the winning applicants must secure a commitment for a 20 percent private-sector match by September 8. The grants fall into three categories: up to \$50 million per “scale-up” grant for programs with a strong track record of success; up to \$30 million per “validation” grant for programs with emerging evidence of success; and up to \$5 million per “development” grant for promising ideas. Winning applicants will serve 42 states, the District of Columbia, and American Samoa, with about half intending to serve limited English proficient students and students with disabilities and 37 percent intending to serve rural districts. (August 2010)



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The Department has [posted](#) a categorized list of all 339 applications for [Promise Neighborhoods](#). Representatives from nearly every state and the District of Columbia submitted applications, including 49 rural and 21 tribal communities. Almost 20 percent of the communities are working with colleges and universities as their lead applicant for the program. Applicants will be reviewed during August by independent peer review committees. The agency will announce up to 20 planning grants of up to \$500,000 each no later than September 30. (August 2010)

The Secretary announced the award of 12 [charter school grants](#), totaling \$136 million to state education agencies in Arkansas, California, Colorado, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Texas to increase public school options in those states. This is an investment of more than \$256 million this year to assist in the planning and implementation of public charter schools and dissemination of their successful practices through the Charter Schools Program. The purpose of the Charter Schools Program is to increase financial support for the startup and expansion of these public schools, build a better national understanding of the public charter school model, and increase the number of high-quality public charter schools across the nation. (August 2010)

During August, two programs in OII's Teacher Quality Programs office announced 2010 grant awards. Grants to improve the quality of teaching American history in U.S. schools, totaling \$115.3 million to 124 school districts, were [announced](#) by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. The [Teaching American History](#) grant program aims to enhance teachers' understanding of American history through intensive professional development, including study trips to historic sites and mentoring with professional historians and other

experts. Also awarded was \$9.2 million in grants under the [School Leadership Program](#) to improve the effectiveness of current and aspiring principals and assistant principals in high-need districts. (August 2010)

Also in August, [33 grants](#) under the [Arts in Education Model Development and Dissemination Program](#) (AEMDD or Arts Models) were awarded to school districts and to nonprofit organizations working in partnership with their local schools. Arts Models grants support the development, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of innovative projects that strengthen both standards-based arts instruction and integration of arts with other core academic subjects in grades pre-K-8. (August 2010)

#### From the Institute of Education Sciences

The National Center for Education Research awarded 36 new [research grants](#) under the Education Research Grants Program and two new grants in the Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies from applications considered under the October 2009 deadline. In addition, two new National Research and Development Centers were awarded. Spending for this round of grants and centers totals \$96 million. The newly funded projects address a wide range of topics and seek to improve student outcomes from preschool to postsecondary in multiple domains using innovative techniques. (July 2010)

The Institute's [Fifth Annual Research Conference](#), "Connecting Research, Policy and Practice," was attended by more than 1,200 education researchers, policymakers, and staff. In his [remarks](#) during the opening plenary session, Secretary Arne Duncan referred to education research as "the compass for education reform, guiding us forward," and encouraged attendees to form partnerships with policymakers. Other plenary speakers sounded a consistent message about pursuing action-oriented, useable research in partnership with educators. (June 2010)

#### Arts Education

The [21st Century Skills Map](#) for the Arts demonstrates how the three Rs and four Cs (critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity and innovation) can be fused within arts curriculum. The map was [released](#) at a Capitol Hill [briefing](#) by representatives from P21, the American Alliance for Theatre & Education, the Educational Theatre Association, the National Art Education Association, MENC: The National Association for Music Education, the National Dance Association, and the National Dance Education Organization. The map provides educator-created examples of how art subjects (dance, music, theatre, and visual and media arts) can be fused with skills to create engaging learning experiences that promote 21st century knowledge and skill acquisition. (July 2010)

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution declaring the week following the second Sunday in September (September 12-18, this year) as [Arts in Education Week](#). While there are a number of established arts education-related recognitions already, this is the first congressional resolution to recognize all the disciplines: music, theater, visual arts, and dance. Sponsored by Rep. Jackie Speiers (D-California), the resolution states many important advocacy messages concerning the importance of the arts as a core academic subject and part of a well-rounded education. (August 2010)

The [Scholastic Art & Writing Awards](#), presented by the nonprofit Alliance for Young Artists & Writers, has a long history of encouraging creativity and highlighting the value of the visual and literary arts in schools and communities nationwide. Launching on September 15, in conjunction with Arts in Education Week, teens in grades 7-12 can [apply](#) in 30 categories of art and writing – including painting, photography, film & animation, video game design, short story, and personal essay/memoir – for the opportunity to earn recognition and scholarships, and to have their works exhibited and published. The Alliance produces an annual exhibition of national award-winning works in New York City and also holds ongoing exhibitions at the U.S. Department of Education headquarters in Washington, D.C. and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, and will host their first-ever traveling exhibition this year to five locations across the country, opening at the Ft. Wayne Museum of Art in November. (August 2010)



Kicking off the program's fifth year, the National Endowment for the Arts announced that 75 nonprofits – including arts and cultural organizations, libraries, and universities – will receive grants totaling \$1 million to host a [Big Read](#) project between September 2010 and June 2011. The Big Read brings communities together to read, discuss, and celebrate one of 31 selections from United States and world literature. (July 2010)

#### Leadership

The largest in-depth [study of school leadership](#) to date, *Learning from Leadership: Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning*, draws on extensive new data from more than 150 schools. The Wallace Foundation, which funded \$3.5 million study, indicated that it “demonstrates a strong, positive link between educational leaders – particularly principals – and student learning outcomes,” according to the Foundation’s [press release](#). Researchers conducted more than 1,000 interviews and surveyed more than 8,000 teachers and administrators. (July 2010)

#### School Improvement

The School Turnaround Group (STG), a division of Mass Insight Education, released its latest publication, [School Turnaround Models: Emerging Turnaround Strategies and Results](#), which contains examples of dramatic reform strategies that lead to significant gains in student achievement. These success stories further STG’s commitment to turning around chronically under-performing schools. In addition to this new publication, STG offers a series of school- and district-level [case studies](#) on its website that provide greater detail on the school turnaround process, implementation strategies, and critical school-level systems employed in successful turnaround efforts. (July 2010)

A [set of best practices](#) for large-scale state testing are available as the result of a collaboration between the [Council of Chief State School Officers](#), which represents commissioners of education, and the [Association of Test Publishers](#), a nonprofit trade group. Work on the guide began in 2006, as a national push for large-scale accountability testing driven by the No Child Left Behind Act called attention to the need of both states and test publishers for guidance in designing and implementing good assessment systems, according to Gene Wilhoit, the CCSSO’s executive director. Its availability is timely given the Race to the Top competitions that include funding for states to develop new assessment systems. (August 2010)

#### Teacher Quality and Development

The [Education Commission of the States](#) (ECS) offers two new resources concerning performance pay for teachers and research concerning the extent to which implicit teacher prejudice is correlated with harsher evaluations of minority students and a wider achievement gap between minority and nonminority students.

In the first case, ECS reviewed the 36 applications to the second round of Race to the Top to analyze them for their similarities and differences relative to [plans for performance pay](#). All 36 applications included such plans, with most of the performance initiatives to be implemented at the individual teacher level. The extent to which a student growth component will be included ranged from 15 to more than 50 percent of the evaluation points.

In its analysis of the implicit [measures of teacher prejudice](#), researchers who studied elementary teachers and students found higher teacher prejudice was correlated with harsher evaluations of minority students and a wider achievement gap as compared to those of teachers with lower implicit prejudice. (July 2010)

The most recent national assessment results in reading placed black fourth-graders in Wisconsin in last place, which was an outrage to Howard Fuller, former Milwaukee Public Schools superintendent. Fuller, now at Marquette University, turned his outrage into action by mobilizing others to join him to determine the best ways to teach elementary reading and raising \$200,000 in public and private funds for the Milwaukee Summer Reading Project. The five-week program is using a research-based curriculum to prepare 87 third and fourth-graders for the new school year. Fuller and his colleagues, however, aren't stopping at summer's end. They are bringing in experts to give guidance on policies and procedures that other states are using to gain higher reading scores. [More—The [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#)] (August 2)

With research findings continuing to mount that point to disparities between income groups in learning loss over the summer – a Johns Hopkins University study, for instance, found that by ninth grade, summer learning loss accounted for nearly two-thirds of the income-group achievement gap – nationwide attention to the problem is increasing. The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA), a nonprofit based in Baltimore, Md., is working to change the negative perceptions of summer school; it shouldn't be seen as "the Grinch that stole summer vacation," notes NSLA's CEO Ron Fairchild. Others, like Earl Phalen of Summer Advantage, are providing intensive summer learning outside of but as a complement to the public schools for students in several Indiana cities. [More—[Time](#)] (August 2)

Twenty-eight states and the District of Columbia are on board with the Common Core standards, with others expected to accept them before summer is over and possibly as many as 40 states by next spring. As the state adoption process moves forward, so does the national dialogue about just how much difference the new standards will make. While the widespread adoption is an impressive feat, notes Frederick Hess of the American Enterprise Institute, "it's really just one-mile marker in a 26-mile marathon." Others, including Michael Cohen, president of Achieve, concur that adoption is only the first step, to be followed by new curricula and tests, improved teacher training, and new accountability systems. [More—[Christian Science Monitor](#)] (July 27)

Elementary teachers in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools will be more effective at integrating engineering and technology in their science curriculum this year thanks to a curriculum developed by Boston's Museum of Science and local partners that include N.C. State University, Discovery Place, UNC at Charlotte, and Duke Energy. Engineering is Elementary (EIS) uses stories set in various places and cultures to introduce real-life engineering issues, as well as hands-on engineering design challenges that students tackle in groups. According to the Museum of Science, an estimated 1.2 million students in all 50 states will experience learning through EIS this new school year. [More—The [Carolina Weekly](#)] (August 6)

In Dallas, 22 elementary schools have a new science partner this fall – the city's Museum of Nature & Science is providing a full-time museum staffer to coordinate classroom visits that will involve artifacts from the museum and hands-on experiments. Most of the classrooms will be fourth graders this first year; the plan is to expand to 80 schools within three years. Based on training they are getting this summer, participating teachers say the partnership is already making them more comfortable with labs and think the hands-on learning will help their students do better on the state assessment. Best of all, the program is free to schools thanks to funding from the Dallas Citizens Council, AT&T, and several other local foundations. [More—The [Dallas Morning News](#)] (July 21)

## Education Data Systems

Principals and teachers in New York City schools now have reports from the City University of New York (CUNY) as to how many of their former students need remedial courses and how many stayed enrolled following their first semester. Similar tracking efforts of high school graduates are underway in Illinois, and Denver and Philadelphia are also planning data systems between high schools and colleges. In New York City, 46 percent of the public school graduates who enrolled in a CUNY two- or four-year college in 2007 needed a minimum of one remedial course. The CUNY data also indicated that 40 percent of those 2007 graduates dropped out of college within two years. [More—The [New York Times](#)] (August 10)

Using the student data tracking system of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, state officials discerned a correlation between schools with weak academic performance and those with large influxes and exoduses of students. They identified 400 underperforming schools statewide that had more than 20 percent of their students registering or departing during the year, in contrast with more than 900 schools with enrollment changes under 10 percent that had stronger academic performance records. Under new state policies, attention will be given to developing interventions for transient students. Additionally, Boston now has a consistent curriculum in English and math in all of its schools to help ease the transition for students moving during the year. [More—The [Boston Globe](#)] (August 2)

## Teachers and Leaders

Arizona teachers begin the new school year with an assignment from their legislators – help to craft the details of a new system of evaluation in which 33 to 50 percent of their annual evaluations will be tied to their students' progress. The statewide measure, Senate Bill 1040, which will result in a evaluation system in place by the 2012-13 school year, will be a work-in-progress this year, needing a “framework” that the state Board of Education must provide that districts and charter schools will use to meet the new requirements. Recommendations to the state board will come from a 12-person task force that includes school administrators, teachers, and union leaders. [More—The [Arizona Republic](#)] (August 1)

Researchers in North Carolina are looking at the question of where credentials matter when it comes to student achievement. What was their conclusion after reviewing statewide data on several large cohorts of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, matching them to their teachers? At the high school level, credentials do matter, according to Duke University researcher Helen F. Ladd, who headed the study, and with a large enough impact on student achievement to warrant attention by education policymakers concerned with raising the quality of instruction. Among specific factors that were found to be linked to higher achievement were obtaining a master's degree after some time in the classroom, high scores on subject-matter tests used for certification, and certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. The full study can be found in the current issue of the *Journal of Human Resources*. [More—[Education Week](#)] (July 21) (*premium article access compliments of EdWeek.org*)

## Interventions in Low-Performing Schools

Going it alone can be risky, and that can be true for individual teachers asked to staff turnaround schools. But in Boston, Teach Plus, a nonprofit organization, is working with three turnaround schools to place teams of experienced teachers to make up a quarter of the staffs for each of the schools. “It’s like jump-starting a culture at these schools,” said Boston School Superintendent Carol R. Johnson, who sees value in having a set of enthusiastic but also experienced teachers in turnaround schools that have high percentages of first- and second-year teachers. Funding for Teach Plus, which helps to prepare the teams during the summer, is coming from the Gates Foundation. [More—The [New York Times](#)] (August 9)

Shawnee High School has a new name, the Academy @ Shawnee, and a new principal, Keith Look, with a tall order: turnaround a school that has a 60-percent graduation rate. He is heading one of six turnarounds in Jefferson County and getting help from the Kentucky Principals Academy at the University of Louisville and other supports are coming his way from the state education department and other resources. But before

the school doors open this month, Look has to scrutinize and change the schedules of 100 Shawnee juniors and seniors who are enrolled in classes that won't result in credits they need to graduate. *Education Week* looks inside the turnaround efforts at the Academy @ Shawnee in a special series in the weeks to come. [More—[Education Week](#)] (August 4) (*premium article access compliments of EdWeek.org*)

In Prince George's County, Md., the theory of "two is better than one" is being tried at Gholson Middle School, a turnaround school about to open with a new faculty and staff. The two in this instance is the principal post, which will be shared by two seasoned local administrators who spent part of the past school year preparing for the uncommon role. They participated in the New Leaders for New Schools program, which allowed them to take an in-depth look at a county school needing reform and to devise a plan for it. The school they chose was Gholson and the two proposed the co-principal approach. Funding from a \$1.5 million grant to Prince George's County from the U.S. Department of Education will help cover the costs. [More—The [Washington Post](#)] (July 29)

## STEM

There was little or no break for STEM teachers and some students in many places this summer. Here's a sample of summer STEM initiatives in the local news:

LaGuardia Community College in New York City was host to 65 high school students who participated in the Youth Center for Engineering Excellence. The program serves low-income minority students to interest them in pursuing careers in engineering and science. The focus is on hands-on experiences and participants create such inventions as recycling robots and solar-powered boats. [More—The [New York Daily News](#)] (August 11)

At the University of Illinois at Urbana, middle and high school teachers from around the state learned about nanotechnology. The emphasis is on them bringing hands-on experiences with the science genre into their classrooms, for which the University's Center for Nanoscale Chemical Electrical Manufacturing Systems offers them loans of staging devices and micromanipulators. [More—The [Urbana/Champaign \(IL\) News-Gazette](#)] (August 3)

The NASA Summer of Innovation landed in Chicago this summer to offer middle school students from the city's South Side and south suburbs learning in science, technology, engineering and mathematics in two- and four-week enrichment camps. By August 1, the camps served more than 1,000 students and were expected to reach double that number by summer's end. Community partners that fueled the effort included the University of Illinois-Chicago, the city's Boys and Girls Clubs, and several other community organizations and churches. [More—The [Chicago Sun-Times](#)] (July 31)

In South Carolina, a group of Carver Junior High School students from District 7 participated in the U.S. Military Academy at West Point's Summer STEM Quest Institute, which is boosting student interest in the STEM career fields. The experience was the kick-off of a year-long collaboration between the school and West Point as well as with NASA and Clemson University as the junior high school transitions to a STEM program focus as part of a restructuring plan for all District 7 schools. [More—The [Spartanburg \(SC\) Herald Journal](#)] (July 30)

## 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.

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