



Headlines

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2	11.19.08*	<u>Learning zone: Harlem project gives poor students an edge</u> Excerpt: In the late 1990s, education-reform advocate Geoffrey Canada began an ambitious social experiment, pledging to do whatever it took to improve the lives of New York City's poor children.	Edutopia	Bernice Yeung
3	11.20.08*	<u>Study: Kids developing social skills online</u> Excerpt: Children these days are growing up in the digital age. While many parents may fear that too much computer time or that texting can be a bad thing when it comes to developing a child's communication skills, a new extensive study conducted by Chicago's MacArthur Foundation found just the opposite.	ABC7 News (WLS-TV Chicago)	Ravi Baichwal
4	11.20.08*	<u>A message from the Providence School Department</u>	The Providence American	Thomas Brady



Excerpt: Dear Providence Students and Families: What an exciting month. I am pleased to share that so many of our teachers and students used this years historic Presidential election as a real-world learning opportunity.

5 11.20.08* [A new team Arne Duncan](#) The New York Times Sam Dillon

Excerpt: As he prepares to take office, President-elect Barack Obama is relying on a small team of advisers who will lead his transition operation and help choose the members of the Obama administration. Following is part of a series of profiles of potential members of the administration.

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Excerpt: The city's new career and

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| | | Excerpt: Though presidential candidates often say that education will be one of their top priorities, the job of education secretary is often among the last cabinet seats filled. | | |
| 21 | 11.26.08 | <u>Professor is leading ed. policy</u> | Education Week | David J. Hoff |

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Excerpt: President-elect Barack Obama made the first significant education appointment of his transition, naming a prominent education researcher and a frequently mentioned candidate for secretary of education to lead the review of federal education policy.

**While these articles did not appear during the week of 11.21.08 – 11.26.08, they have been included due to the relevant subject matter.*

Article 1

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The Providence Journal No common vision to teach math 11.18.08

Jennifer D. Jordan

PROVIDENCE — Rhode Island must adopt a clear, cohesive approach to math education throughout all grade levels and across all school districts if it is going to improve its dismal performance in this key area, a team of researchers yesterday told participants at the state's second mathematics summit.

Right now, districts, schools and, in some cases, individual teachers decide what is taught — and not taught — in math classes, with troubling results.

On the statewide math test administered for the first time last year, about 80 percent of high school juniors failed to score proficient. Rhode Island students also fare poorly on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, with large numbers of low-income, black and Hispanic students failing to demonstrate proficiency on the test, which is administered in eighth grade.

In response to the troubling scores, Governor Carcieri and education officials convened a math summit in May to discuss the issue and generate ideas about how to address it. Yesterday at Rhode Island College, more than 200 local educators — teachers, curriculum coordinators, school administrators, higher education faculty and Department of Education officials — discussed a plan to improve math education on a statewide level, not just in each district or school.

"You need to figure out why Rhode Island is underperforming in every subcategory of students," said Uri Treisman, executive director of the Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, a national research center in education policy and research. "Why are you so much better at serving the advantaged kids ... but not at serving the poorest kids? This will probably lead to some painful, private discussions."

The Department of Education is considering hiring the Dana Center to help develop a consistent approach to math instruction from kindergarten through grade 12, said Mary Ann Snider, the department's director of assessment and accountability. About \$200,000 has been set aside for the possible collaboration.

“There are excellent things going on in our state,” Snider said. “The problem is we don’t have a shared vision and foundation on which all these good things can be placed.”

The department gathered feedback from districts that participated in the first math summit — involving 31 of the state’s 36 districts — and learned that while some schools offered support for struggling students and professional development for teachers, others did not, Snider said.

Providence, the state’s largest district, with 24,000 students, and one of the lowest performing, has no defined curriculum in place and is only now addressing this major obstacle to improving student performance, said Sharon Contreras, Providence’s chief academic officer.

Since June, Providence has been working with the Dana Center to align its math and science classes with the state’s grade-level expectations and is developing curricula, Contreras said. The district has a one-year, \$1-million contract with the center, and plans to extend the deal a year, so similar work can be done in English Language Arts, social studies, technology and the arts.

State officials, and the researchers from the Dana Center, stopped short of calling for a statewide math curriculum that would require specific textbooks — a concept that local districts have long opposed. Instead, they advocate a common vision for math instruction based on grade-level expectations and a shared understanding of the rigor and the order mathematical concepts should be taught.

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Edutopia

Learning zone: Harlem project gives poor students an edge

11.19.08

Bernice Yeung

Author Paul Tough talks about the community's innovative approach to education.

In the late 1990s, education-reform advocate Geoffrey Canada began an ambitious social experiment, pledging to do whatever it took to improve the lives of New York City's poor children. The Harlem Children's Zone has since grown into a ninety-seven-block community-service project that includes Promise Academy charter schools, social services, parenting classes, and early-childhood-development and after-school programs.

Through his innovative approach, Canada has demonstrated that it's possible to bridge the achievement gap if disadvantaged kids receive early, continuous educational opportunities. Test results show that in 2004, the Promise Academy middle school's first year, only 21 percent of its students were at grade level in reading and 9 percent were at grade level in math. Three years later, those figures had improved to 33 percent and 70 percent respectively.

Paul Tough, an editor at the *New York Times Magazine*, chronicles the Harlem Children's Zone's successes -- and its setbacks -- in his new book, *Whatever It Takes: Geoffrey Canada's Quest to Change Harlem and America*. *Edutopia.org* spoke

with Tough about early-childhood development, the role of parents in education, and whether Canada's model can work in other parts of the country.

Edutopia.org: In the book, you use social science research to identify tools and strategies that can close the achievement gap. What does the research tell us?

Paul Tough: Poor kids need different types of support than middle-class kids. Lots of research talks about what happens in the first few years of a kid's life and how poor children don't get the support and input -- things as simple as language or as complicated as an outlook on life, self-esteem, and how you interact with institutions -- that middle-class kids tend to get. This means that poor kids need something different when they arrive in school. There's nothing inherent about kids in poverty that means that they can't do as well anybody else. It just takes a lot.

Now, we can get to the practical questions: What exactly is it that's missing in the inputs for these kids in early years? What interventions can we make? That's exactly what Geoffrey Canada is trying to figure out.

What can be done if you don't have a Geoffrey Canada in your community?

At a community level, the thing that I'm most surprised isn't being done is parenting programs such as the Harlem Children's Zone Baby College. I think it has to do with an awkwardness around the question of teaching parents, especially poor parents. It makes people anxious, for lots of good reasons. It's easy to seem condescending if you're talking to parents in the wrong way.

Your portrayals of some classrooms and teachers suggest that there are dynamic leaders out there.

I chose a couple of scenes from the middle school as they were preparing for the first round of citywide tests. There were lots of moments of teachers browbeating kids and trying to make things fun and trying to keep their attention and trying to pull them along. But I didn't choose those scenes because I thought they were an example of the kind of teaching that would solve this problem; they exemplified the distance that the kids had to go.

Where it was clearer to me that the teachers were doing something helpful was in the lower grades -- actually, in prekindergarten. The prekindergarten teachers were just so focused on and conscious of language, on how to get language into every part of the day to expand these kids' vocabularies, which all this research shows is exactly what the students need the most at that stage.

At what point in the reporting did you begin to think Canada's methods were actually working?

I spent the first couple of years really focused on the middle school, where I didn't necessarily get the feeling that this works. And then the problems pushed me toward research. These kids were entering sixth grade but reading at a second- or third-grade level, and I just didn't know the answer to the following question: How do you get a kid like that to read at grade level? Geoff just sort of had this faith that he was going to be able to do it by giving them more time in class and more intensity

I felt I wanted to know the answer. I started focusing my reporting on the prekindergarten and elementary school. The research was clear about how effective

interventions were in early years, and Geoff was the one person who was really testing it out and putting it into action. The two things began to dovetail.

Do you think the Harlem Children's Zone project, which has a 2009 budget of \$40 million, is replicable? How do you see this playing out in other cities?

I think that it's absolutely replicable. It is going to take a lot of money. James Heckman, an economist, makes the most convincing case when he says that the reason to invest in early education and comprehensive education of this sort is not just out of a sense of moral obligation or social justice, but also out of economic necessity. That money will pay off when it's spent earlier on.

As for the logistics about how others are going to replicate it, I don't know yet. I hope people don't just clone it. The members of the education-reform community -- the people who are running organizations such as Teach for America, New Leaders for New Schools, KIPP, and Achievement First -- are essential. They already have the right mind-set and resources. They're bringing a way of thinking about working with poor kids that has not existed in the past, which is very scientific and very much about results. It's not about being satisfied with a feel-good story of one kid who succeeds; it's about being satisfied by big numbers and consistent results.

Much of this research shows that parenting is crucial to a child's academic achievement. Do we need to rethink our definition of a teacher? Should our expectations of teachers change?

One thing social scientists and Geoff are saying is that the old division between school and everything else is obsolete. If we want to think about helping kids, we have to think about every part of their day and every part of their lives and how best we can intervene to improve their chances.

I was really struck by the principal of the elementary school, Dennis McKesey. There's this debate in a lot of schools about whether the parents or the teachers are responsible, and if the parents aren't doing their jobs, can we really be expected to educate the kids? What Dennis says is that we have to think of ways to compensate for the parents, but it's also his responsibility to get the parents to do their part. He's asking himself, "How do we make connections with parents and bring them along so they are the asset and resource we need to help the kids in our classes?" It's a new and important mind-set about looking more holistically at what you can do as a teacher for the kids you're teaching.

Have you received much response from teachers?

Most of it came through my *Slate* blog, *Schoolhouse Rock*, in September. It's been very gratifying to hear from teachers. They have a hard job, especially those working in poorer communities. Judging from some of the emails I receive, they don't feel like they get any support. They don't get support from their principals, and they're not in schools focused on solving this problem. Those are painful to get, but I'm also hearing from teachers who are inspired by the book.

Bernice Yeung is a freelance writer in San Francisco.

ABC7 News (WLS-TV Chicago)
Study: Kids developing social skills online
11.20.08

Ravi Baichwal

CHICAGO (WLS) -- Children these days are growing up in the digital age.

While many parents may fear that too much computer time or that texting can be a bad thing when it comes to developing a child's communication skills, a new extensive study conducted by Chicago's MacArthur Foundation found just the opposite.

Nobody is saying let your kids lock themselves away in their rooms and spend all day, every day, on Facebook; connect over MySpace; or text message only and not talk. But a three-year study funded by Chicago's MacArthur Foundation found that in 2008, kids use digital communication to build their friendships and enhance their literacy in the media that matters in the 21st century.

"Whether it is creating profiles whether it is friending, whether it is figuring out how to make parts of yourself public and that public nature is going to stay public for a very long time, so kids are learning how to grapple with those kinds of dynamics," said Connie Yawley, MacArthur Foundation.

Everyone knows Internet socializing only is inherently unhealthy. But in the first big study to show what teens are actually doing with digital media, researchers found that parents should relax; their kids are essentially where they need to be when they're in front of a screen -- either mixing it up socially or using the tools to discover more about the world -- and their interest in it.

"I think the potential is there for us to be raising a new generation of young people who have grown up with technology and can be self directed in their learning, on their time schedules," said Dr. Mimi Ito, lead researcher.

It's likely a hard lesson for parents, that lots of this is all pretty much good. But there is a simple reason why what's being presented as the new reality should give adults pause about their approach to regulating screen time for their kids.

"Those of us who did not grow up digitally savvy tend to look at the superficial aspects of what is happening online and we see a misspelling. What we don't see is the broader communication that is going on and the deep interest and passions kids are beginning to explore online," said Ito.

They are benefits one Chicago Public Schools principal, a Facebook and MySpace user himself, extols with a big caveat.

"It is always about the supervision. Parents need to keep an eye on their kids. You can't just send them to their rooms and give them a remote and a computer and expect them to do what is right. You have to make sure that you are constantly supervising them," said Krish Mohip, CPS principal.

And better communication is the key, communication that researchers stress is all about teaching kids judgment on how to be media literate.

As far as dangers on the Internet go, the researchers found what one might call "stranger danger" and other Internet-related threats to kids are relatively rare, and that cuts across race, class and gender lines. The study found the vast majority of American teens have the judgment to use digital communication wisely, even if they don't want you to be their friend on Facebook or MySpace.

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The Providence American A message from the Providence School Department 11.20.08

Thomas Brady

Dear Providence Students and Families:

What an exciting month. I am pleased to share that so many of our teachers and students used this year's historic Presidential election as a real-world learning opportunity. Providence schools and our students enjoyed the flurry of activity around the election season, many by holding mock elections, educating children at all grade levels on the importance of voting and civic responsibility. Students were also encouraged to delve into issues of importance, to their families in the immediate sense, and to their own futures in the long range.

We have just completed the first quarter of this school year, and our schools are going strong. The range of learning activities that I've seen and heard of at all grade levels is astounding. Our Providence students are sharing in opportunities offered through university partnerships, community agencies, and more. I am excited to report that the Providence Schools administrative team is working to further develop those connections, and to continue offering our students opportunities to expand their horizons beyond the walls of their schools, across our city, our state, and our region.

More good news for our school communities Providence was recently selected as one of ten communities in the nation to receive a Federal grant to create a Full Service Community School program. Dorcas Place Adult and Family Learning Center is to be commended for spearheading this effort, which will provide students and their families with the supports they need to achieve success, including before- and after-school programming, Family Literacy classes, wraparound case management services, health and nutrition programming and parental involvement initiatives. The programs will take place at the school or in families homes. Five of our elementary schools will participate Robert Bailey, Cornell Young, Charlotte Woods, Alfred Lima and Charles Fortes. Supporting community partners include Dorcas Place, the Greater Providence YMCA, John Hope Settlement House, the Providence Public Schools and Making Connections Providence.

In another project supporting healthy families, Hope High School has recently partnered with Whole Foods Market to open a food bank within the school to help provide students who are in need with healthy foods to help maintaining a nutritious and balanced diet. Food will be given to students in discreet backpacks, donated by the teachers and guidance counselors at the school. Whole Foods Market's Waterman Street location will sponsor the Whole Kids Food Bank and stock the pantry with healthy staples. Students in Special Education classes at Hope High School worked to get the Food Bank ready by taking inventory, stocking shelves

and cleaning the area in which the Food Bank is located. The students, under the direction of a team of student managers, will continue the operations of the pantry, building practical life skills while providing a service to their peers and community. More of these types of in-school food banks are in development through Whole Foods, supplementing the successful program modeled already in our schools by the Sodexo Backpack program.

I'll continue to share these developments with you, and wish all our Providence families a warm and happy Thanksgiving.

Best regards,

Thomas M. Brady Superintendent

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The New York Times
A new team Arne Duncan
11.20.08

Sam Dillon

As he prepares to take office, President-elect Barack Obama is relying on a small team of advisers who will lead his transition operation and help choose the members of the Obama administration. Following is part of a series of profiles of potential members of the administration.

Name: Arne Duncan

Being considered for: Secretary of education

Would bring to the job: Seven years' experience as chief executive of the Chicago Public Schools, the nation's third-largest school district, where he has earned a solid reputation for confronting pressing issues in public education, like how to raise teacher quality, how to transform weak schools and when to shutter those that are irredeemably failing.

Is linked to Mr. Obama by: Playing pickup basketball games together in Chicago since they met in the early 1990s through Michelle Obama's brother. Mr. Duncan was a co-captain of the basketball team at Harvard. His sports friendship with Mr. Obama evolved into a shared interest in the problems of urban education, and they have visited Chicago schools together to examine questions like how best to train teachers. Mr. Duncan helped shape Mr. Obama's education program.

In his own words: "We are one of the few districts in the country that has shut down underperforming schools and replaced the entire school staff. This turnaround school strategy has taken some of our lowest-performing schools and doubled or tripled test scores within a few years. Same kids, different teachers, new leadership, a new educational approach, and the results are dramatic." (Testimony before House education committee, July 17, 2008.)

Used to work as: Played professional basketball in Australia, 1987-91; directed the Ariel Education Initiative, a philanthropic effort with a small staff that seeks to create better schooling opportunities for poor children on the South Side of Chicago, 1991-

98; director of magnet schools and deputy chief of staff to the Chicago schools chief, Paul G. Vallas, 1998-2001.

Carries as baggage: Has little of the national political experience that education secretaries often need in representing the White House's educational agenda before Congress and negotiating with the leaders of the 50 state school systems and the myriad interest groups that make up the educational establishment. His expertise in elementary-secondary education is considerable, and his late father was a psychology professor at the University of Chicago, but Mr. Duncan has little professional experience navigating the higher-education landscape.

Is otherwise known for: His height (he is 6 foot 5) and his passion for literacy. He tutored Chicago children during a year he took off from studying sociology at Harvard. His father used a basketball analogy with reporters when he took over the Chicago school system: "At the end of the game, if the team is behind by two points with about three seconds to go, Arne wants the ball. He does not shrink from taking responsibility."

Résumé includes: Born Nov. 6, 1964. ... comes from a family of educators; his mother founded and has run a vaunted Chicago tutoring program for 48 years. ... graduated magna cum laude from Harvard and sits on the Harvard Board of Overseers.

Article 6

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City Insider, San Francisco Chronicle (Blog) Schools out for summer...in May? 11.20.08

Jill Tucker

San Francisco school officials are mulling over an idea to start school next year in early August and finish up before the calendar flips to June.

The new schedule would allow schools to wrap up the first semester before the two-week winter break. Currently, students take two weeks off and then come back in January to face finals and end-of-semester stuff -- their minds often hazy on whatever it was they were studying back in December.

"Students then need additional review when they return to school just to get back up to where they were when they left off. Many of our teachers know how disruptive this is to the curriculum and how much time is wasted in ramping down and ramping back up because of the winter break," according to district officials in an FAQ on the proposal.

The new schedule would also be more closely aligned with City College of San Francisco, giving high school students a greater opportunity to simultaneously attend classes there.

The potential downside for students and teachers is a short summer break between the current end of school on June 9 and the first day of school on Aug. 10.

The district is proposing three schedules for the 2009-2010 school year, including one that reflects the status quo.

"Stakeholder groups," including labor unions and parent organizations are currently meeting to discuss the idea. The school board is expected to take public comments on the options at their Dec. 9 meeting.

San Francisco Chronicle
Stanford professor leads Obama transition team
11.22.08

Nanette Asimov

It's been a busy week for Linda Darling-Hammond, a Stanford University education professor who heads back to Washington, D.C., on Sunday to preside over the start of what she hopes will be a new - and better funded - era for public schools.

Darling-Hammond, a teacher-friendly educator, has been tapped by President-elect Barack Obama to head his transition team on education policy.

Her name appears on some - not all - of the guessing-game lists put out by education observers speculating about who Obama will pick to head the huge U.S. Department of Education. And she is the subject of an online petition begun by a teacher in Hawaii that's attracted thousands of people - many of them teachers - urging the president-elect to choose her.

"I have no idea who it will be," says Darling-Hammond, switching the topic to what she described as an education agenda "more bold and ambitious than anything we've seen since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965 ... and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act" a decade later.

At this point, it's still all about big money and big concepts: \$10 billion to develop preschool programs for all children; \$8 billion to narrow the achievement gap in elementary and secondary schools; \$11 billion to send more students to college.

Darling-Hammond's job is to head the team that will gather ideas about how to turn those ideas into legislation. She dismissed the idea that such plans are pipe dreams in the current economy.

"This is decimal dust in the federal budget," she said.

The \$29 billion Obama wants to add for education "is less than 10 percent of the weapons cost-overrun announced last summer," she said. "It's less than 1 percent of what the bailout is anticipated to cost."

Darling-Hammond is little known outside the field of education. But she's a household name within that circle and is best known for her research on effective teachers and schools.

At Stanford, she founded and is co-director of the School Redesign Network, which works to improve underperforming schools. She has written more than a dozen books on education, and is sought after as an expert and public speaker.

Education Week newspaper named her the nation's 10th most influential educator in 2006 - tied with the current education secretary, Margaret Spellings.

Darling-Hammond's name has gotten less buzz than some others in the online cogitation over the next education secretary. The hottest pick right now is Arne Duncan, an Obama pal and chief executive officer for Chicago schools. Other names being floated are former North Carolina Gov. Jim Hunt; Christopher Edley Jr., dean of the UC Berkeley School of Law; and wild card Colin Powell, former secretary of state under George W. Bush, who endorsed Obama.

But even if Darling-Hammond is not chosen to succeed Spellings, those who have run a president-elect's education policy team have had "enormous influence," said Mike Kirst, education professor emeritus at Stanford University.

For example, he said, Marshall Smith went on to become an undersecretary of education under President Clinton.

Some observers believe the selection of Darling-Hammond as an adviser and policy expert during the transition period shows that Obama is leaning toward a more teacher-friendly approach than has been seen in recent years.

"It's such a clear change from what we've had," said Marty Hittelman, president of the California Federation of Teachers. "Someone who's friendly to labor. Someone who wants to work with teachers."

Darling-Hammond had high praise for teachers and their unions at the spring convention of the state's other teachers' organization, the California Teachers Association. "This is the most important group in California, as far as I'm concerned," she said during her keynote address. "The teachers who lead our urban school systems are the folks who will determine the future of this state and the future of the nation."

It's been a long time since teachers' unions have felt so welcomed by federal education officials. Although the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 is credited with forcing educators to pay attention to every child's performance, many teachers believe that its tone is punitive and that its emphasis on multiple-choice testing has drained the joy out of teaching.

Under Obama, Darling-Hammond suggested, things will be different.

"You'll see public schools focused on preparing kids to problem-solve, think critically, design research and produce strong intellectual work as a result," she said.

Not everyone is convinced that this approach would be any different from the pre-No Child Left Behind days when students slipped through the cracks because no one held schools and teachers accountable.

Chester Finn Jr., president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, an education think tank in Washington, sees Obama as torn between what he calls "serious reformers - for standards, accountability, choice, merit pay and a bunch of other important changes," and the "education establishment and its powerful unions."

Finn, also a fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford, said Obama straddled these two approaches during the campaign.

"I, of course, hope he sides with the reformers," Finn said. "At heart, I think he is one."

The Idaho Statesman
Boise teacher uses iPods in lessons
11.22.08

Sandra Forester

BOISE, Idaho – Sixth-grade teacher Richard Whittaker is a modern-day Merlin with long gray locks.

But he wears sport clothes instead of robes, and in place of a wand he uses iPods to take his students from Collister Elementary School in Boise to real-time scientific explorations at the bottom of the sea or on a wild weather trip.

He can load lessons enhanced with video clips, homework assignments, quizzes, videos, music, books on tape and more on the class iPods for use in all subjects he teaches, including English, math, social studies and reading.

Students can take the iPods - purchased with a Qwest Foundation grant - home. They can do much of their work on the machines and even show off their own videos.

"It surprised me at first," said sixth-grade student Cole Parkinson, 10. "We're able to do our homework on them, and we can share the videos we make or watch with our parents."

Whittaker's students now seem willingly engaged in learning.

"I feel like we get more out of it because we can watch videos at home," said sixth-grader Sydney Scarrow, 11.

Whittaker said the technology helped last year's class achieve some of the highest Idaho State Achievement Test scores in the state: 100 in reading, 95 in math and 95 in language arts.

"I already see improvements" in this year's class, he said. "They're just more involved."

The 37-year veteran said he got the idea from his wife, who read an article about a teacher frustrated with his students listening to iPods in class. That teacher video recorded his lessons to download to his plugged-in students. And Whittaker, who had already incorporated a Smart board interactive whiteboard and projector into his teaching, decided he could do that and more.

The iPods help level the playing field for students who don't have computers or Internet access at home, and they allow students to move at their own pace and review lessons for better understanding.

"Guess what? They do it on their own," he said. "I don't have to assign it."

The tools have reached just about everyone. Struggling students have gotten better. Top-of-the-class types can take their studies even further.

Collister librarian Coleen Robbins said schools need to embrace new technology if education is going to be cutting edge.

"It's effective," she said. "If we don't offer this to our kids, we're missing the boat."

Whittaker, however, hasn't forsaken the old ways completely.

"We still send books home now and then," he said.

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The Providence Journal Providence's new technical high school boasts athletic fields, TV station, wireless library 11.23.08

Linda Borg

PROVIDENCE — The city's new career and technical high school will include a 60,000-square-foot athletic complex with a 200-meter track, three basketball courts and an indoor soccer field.

On Friday, visitors had a chance to tour the 296,000-square-foot Career & Technical Academy, which incorporates the existing Hanley Career and Technical Center on Fricker Street. The new athletic complex will serve as a venue for intramural and interscholastic competition, with room for 1,000 spectators.

When completed in September, the athletic facility will be open to the city's other public high schools, especially those 1,000-plus students who attend schools with limited athletic facilities, said school spokeswoman Christina Reilly. In addition, it will serve students who are interested in track but have no place to train.

"None of the other high schools have regulation tracks available," Reilly said after Friday's topping-off ceremony, in which a small Christmas tree was hoisted on top an iron beam. "The basketball courts can accommodate a large audience. The ultimate goal is to be able to host events rather than pay rent elsewhere."

Several of the city's largest high schools hold their graduations at private facilities such as the Veterans Memorial Auditorium. With the new complex, they can hold them in-house. In addition to track, basketball and soccer, the facility is flexible enough to be used for football and baseball practice during bad weather and the infield can be used for volleyball or tennis.

Beneath the athletic complex, Providence-based construction company Gilbane is building a mall-like space with a student café, culinary arts program, cosmetology salon and school store.

Next door, the old Hanley building has been transformed from a series of warren-like rooms into a building full of natural light. The new Career & Technical Academy is very green, with solar and thermal water heaters, LED lighting and low-flow fixtures that will save an estimated 30 percent in water usage.

The top floor features a wireless library with no books; instead, students can access 80 laptops and a Smart Board, an interactive, electronic whiteboard. When finished,

the school will have a recording studio and a television station for students interested in studying electronic media.

Even the drab walls have been replaced with rich primary colors. Project director Bill Bryan said that Gilbane wanted to reflect the tastes of the district's culturally diverse student body, whose children speak about 40 different languages.

And, in an effort to make every possible space a learning experience, the ceiling is exposed so students can literally see how the building is put together.

The school will offer nine career paths: carpentry, automotive, electrical, graphic communications, culinary arts, plumbing, heating and ventilation, construction and cosmetology. Each student will graduate with a high school diploma and industry-recognized certification in his or her chosen field.

The \$90-million Career & Technical Academy, which includes the athletic facility, is part of a \$790-million proposal to renovate the city's aging school buildings. On Friday, the city's director of administration, Richard I. Kerbel, stressed that the bonds for this project and the \$35 million Nathan Bishop Middle School renovation have not been jeopardized by the meltdown in the financial markets.

The state will reimburse the city for at least 80 percent of the total construction cost, possibly more because the school department is building such an energy-efficient facility, according to Alan Sepe, the city's acting director of facilities.

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The Washington Post **Obama faces fierce fight to keep education promises** **11.24.08**

Maria Glod

President-elect Barack Obama has made big promises to educators, parents and the nation's nearly 50 million public school students. He vowed to recruit an "army of new teachers," create better tests and give public schools more funding. He also said he would make college more affordable.

As the new administration prepares to take over the Education Department, school experts say one of Obama's first -- and toughest -- jobs must be restoring the broad bipartisan support it took to pass the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act, which aims to boost the achievement of poor children. That consensus has splintered, with people on both sides of the aisle souring on the law as it is overdue for reauthorization in Congress.

"Forget the details of No Child Left Behind. The big challenge there is having to rebuild that bipartisan coalition," said Gary Huggins, director of the Commission on No Child Left Behind, an independent effort of the Aspen Institute. "On the Democratic side you have people walking away from it because of union pushback. On the GOP side you have people walking away because this is too large a federal footprint."

Helping ensure college access is likely to be the next president's most pressing education priority. The financial downturn has raised concerns about the continuing availability of student loans. On Thursday, the Education Department announced

plans to expand purchases of the loans it backs, the most recent of several steps to help avert a student loan crisis.

"The most immediate issue is just the question of stability within the student loan programs," said Alexa Marrero, spokeswoman for Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (Calif.), ranking Republican on the House Education and Labor Committee. "If we realize there's a problem, it will be too late."

But it is Obama's vision of refining the federal role in America's classrooms that may be the biggest political and policy challenge. He inherits an agency -- and a law -- that is seen by some local schools and union leaders as focusing more on sanctions and policing than on helping build better schools.

The Education Department, created in 1980, has a \$68.6 billion annual budget and plays a relatively minor role in financing for the nation's public schools. Much of its kindergarten-through-12th-grade spending focuses on helping students from poor families. But No Child Left Behind, enacted under President Bush, ushered in unprecedented federal influence in classrooms with a massive expansion of testing. With the aim of having all children proficient in reading and math by 2014, schools must meet steadily rising test score goals or risk sanctions as severe as a forced management shakeup.

Federal education officials have supported states in creating tests and improving instruction, but the Bush administration also has clashed with local school leaders over testing requirements, even threatening to withhold federal dollars.

Education Secretary Margaret Spellings is known for experimenting with ways to make the law more flexible for schools and states but also for protecting what she calls the law's "bright line" testing and accountability regimen.

Previous secretaries, including William Bennett in the Reagan administration, Lamar Alexander in the George H.W. Bush presidency and Richard W. Riley in the Clinton administration, have used the office as a platform to push for one brand of school reform or another. Various names have been floated as possible successors to Spellings, but no clear front-runner has emerged.

On Thursday, Anne L. Bryant, executive director of the National School Boards Association, called on the incoming administration to "facilitate, not dictate."

Efforts in Congress to reauthorize No Child Left Behind stalled as lawmakers awaited a new president. On his campaign Web site, Obama promised to "improve NCLB's accountability system so that we are supporting schools that need improvement, rather than punishing them." And he said he would support merit pay programs designed in concert with teachers.

Education experts say the next president will have to put a leader at the helm of the department who can reinvigorate support for the federal role in reforming public education. People in both major parties have railed against, and rallied for, No Child Left Behind.

In a letter this month to the Wall Street Journal, Rep. Peter Hoekstra (R-Mich.) called No Child Left Behind "the most massive shift from personal freedom to government intervention." Hoekstra wrote: "Once you've sold out parents and children, voting for massive spending increases to fund NCLB, selling out freedom in other areas became very easy, almost necessary."

The Democratic-supporting teachers unions aren't happy either. The National Education Association has called the law "prescriptive and punitive."

But an unusual coalition of business and civil rights leaders, including the Business Roundtable, the NAACP and the National Council of La Raza, supports the law.

They worry that too many revisions will weaken the government resolve to force schools to help disadvantaged students.

"The big challenge for President-elect Obama is he's going to have to appease the reformers, but also the teacher's unions, and that's going to be a delicate dance," said Michael J. Petrilli, who was associate assistant deputy secretary in the Education Department from 2001 to 2005 and now works at the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, an education think tank. "They are all going to be watching for signs that he's with them."

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The Wall Street Journal Change our public schools need 11.24.08

Terry M. Moe

Obama and the Democrats should put kids before unions.

Can Barack Obama bring change to American education? The answer is: Yes he can. The question, however, is whether he actually will. Our president-elect has the potential to be an extraordinary leader, and that's why I've supported him since the beginning of his campaign. But on public education, he and the Democrats are faced with a dilemma that has boxed in the party for decades.

Democrats are fervent supporters of public education, and the party genuinely wants to help disadvantaged kids stuck in bad schools. But it resists bold action. It is immobilized. Impotent. The explanation lies in its longstanding alliance with the teachers' unions -- which, with more than three million members, tons of money and legions of activists, are among the most powerful groups in American politics. The Democrats benefit enormously from all this firepower, and they know what they need to do to keep it. They need to stay inside the box.

And they have done just that. Democrats favor educational "change" -- as long as it doesn't affect anyone's job, reallocate resources, or otherwise threaten the occupational interests of the adults running the system. Most changes of real consequence are therefore off the table. The party specializes instead in proposals that involve spending more money and hiring more teachers -- such as reductions in class size, across-the-board raises and huge new programs like universal preschool. These efforts probably have some benefits for kids. But they come at an exorbitant price, both in dollars and opportunities foregone, and purposely ignore the fundamentals that need to be addressed.

What should the Democrats be doing? Above all, they should be guided by a single overarching principle: Do what is best for children. As for specifics, here are a few that deserve priority.

They need to get serious about accountability. The unions want it eviscerated, and many Democrats are eager to sing their tune: denouncing No Child Left Behind, excoriating standardized tests, opposing consequences for poor performance, and demanding more money.

Real accountability is about standing up for children. The adults are supposed to be teaching kids something, and accountability demands hard, objective measures -- through sophisticated testing and information systems -- of how well they are actually doing that. Good performance needs to be rewarded. But poor performance needs to be uprooted: Schools need to be reconstituted, teachers need to be moved out of the classroom, jobs need to be put at risk -- because if they aren't, children continue to be victimized.

Democrats also have to get serious about school choice. The unions oppose it because they don't want one student or one dollar to leave the regular public schools, where their members teach. So the Democrats have been timid and weak in putting choice to productive use -- even though their constituents are the ones trapped in deplorably bad urban schools, whose futures are being ruined, and who are desperate for new educational opportunities.

If children were their sole concern, Democrats would be the champions of school choice. They would help parents put their kids into whatever good schools are out there, including private schools. They would vastly increase the number of charter schools. They would see competition as healthy and necessary for the regular public schools, which should never be allowed to take kids and money for granted.

The Democrats also need to get serious about the downside of collective bargaining. They have long looked the other way as labor contracts impose page after page of onerous work rules -- basing teacher assignments on seniority, for example, or making it virtually impossible to dismiss anyone. These rules fundamentally shape -- and distort -- the organization of schooling. Because of them, schools are organized to promote the interests of adults, not children. This needs to change.

The Democrats are a party of noble ideals, with a proud history of fighting for the underdogs. So far, their Faustian bargain with the unions has prevented them from living up to what they truly believe. Yet there are two grounds for optimism.

The first is Barack Obama, the party's new leader. He has hinted at a willingness to break with the teachers' unions, and his massive success at decentralized fund raising and recruiting volunteers may enable him to do that. He talks -- vaguely -- about removing mediocre teachers, holding educators accountable, basing pay on performance, and expanding school choice. But his positions on these scores are hedged with qualifications, and his education agenda as a whole is mainly (not entirely) a laundry list of typical Democratic ideas.

The second basis for optimism is that two new groups that speak for disadvantaged kids -- the Education Equality Project and Democrats for Education Reform -- have finally stood up within the party and spoken out against the unions. Including key figures such as Cory Booker, Joel Klein, Michelle Rhee and Al Sharpton, these groups want real accountability, they want more school choice, they want to end restrictive work rules -- and they insist that children come first. This internal rebellion is one of the most important developments in modern American education.

It all boils down to a simple question. Will President Obama have the courage to unite with the rebels inside his party, champion the interests of children over the

interests of adults, and be a true leader who really means it when he talks about change? We can only stay tuned. And have the audacity of hope.

Mr. Moe is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and the William Bennett Munro professor of political science at Stanford University.

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The Christian Science Monitor **Schools feel pinch from economic woes** **11.24.08**

Stacy Teicher Khadaroo

School districts across the United States are tightening their belts in anticipation of a meager fiscal diet that could carry into 2011.

As state and local revenue declines, officials are looking for the trims least likely to harm the quality of education. Although some districts have rainy-day funds to tap, concern is growing that students, particularly those who are struggling to learn or who are homeless, are going to feel the pinch.

Just over a third of superintendents in a recent national survey said they've already increased the size of classes because of the downturn, according to the American Association of School Administrators, an organization in Arlington, Va., that supports high standards for public education. Thirty percent of superintendents are considering layoffs. Of the two-thirds who said their districts are inadequately funded, 83 percent think it's detrimental to their ability to close achievement gaps for minority groups.

If the dry spell lasts through multiple school years, "that's when real noticeable things start to happen," says Michael Griffith, an analyst at the Education Commission of the States, a policy group in Denver. Delaying purchases leads to book shortages, while school technology and infrastructure fray. The ax often comes down on after-school and summer-school programs for struggling students. "The people who are hurt the most are those who need the most assistance," Mr. Griffith says.

With 41 states confronting revenue shortfalls this year or next, a number are likely to include education in their cuts, he says. In California and New York, which had deficit woes even before this fall's financial crisis, proposals to cut education funds midway through the school year are meeting resistance. New York Gov. David Paterson (D) called for pulling back \$840 million of this year's school budget – up to 10 percent for some districts – but the proposal has been shelved until January. California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) wants about \$2.5 billion in cuts to schools and community colleges.

Once schools have signed contracts, if the state withholds promised aid, it would be like "dropping a bomb in the middle of the school year," says Timothy Kremer, executive director of the New York State School Boards Association. "It only happened once before [in New York], in the early '90s," he says. "Many districts had to ... really dig into the bone of their programs, and many of them have told me they never fully recovered."

Ideally, financial crises would be an opportunity for states and local districts to shed

less productive initiatives, but it seems to rarely work that way, says Eric Hanushek, a senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution in California. Often, a simple band-aid measure is the response, he says, such as laying off new teachers. Overall, he says, the challenge is the instability in funding: When "one year you pour a lot of money out to the schools and the next year you squeeze back, it doesn't allow for a lot of rational planning."

Meanwhile, Georgia since 2003 has been sending less money to schools than the state formula calls for, says Herbert Garrett, executive director of the Georgia School Superintendents Association. This year the schools may face a 2 percent shortfall and next year another 3 percent, which would bring the total shortfall since 2003 to nearly \$2 billion, Mr. Garrett says. It appears that state limits on class sizes and initiatives such as one that places a "graduation coach" in each high school are in jeopardy, he says. In his 40 years in education, this economic situation "ranks among the worst," he says.

When states decrease funding, local districts have often found ways to increase theirs – sometimes through higher taxes. "Per-student spending during the downturns of the early '80s and '90s continued to increase," Griffith says.

Now, however, it's not clear how possible that will be in any but the wealthiest districts. "In previous times, school districts have turned to the business community, the parent community for support ... [but now] the well is dry everywhere you look," says Dan Domenech, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators.

Schools are feeling the squeeze just as there's a surging need for the safety net they provide. Hundreds of districts are reporting that in the first few months of school, they've served nearly as many homeless students as in the entire previous year. Las Vegas saw an 82 percent increase in the first two weeks.

Districts are each required to have a liaison to help homeless children stay on track in school. "Some of the liaisons say they can't get through their stack of referrals," says Barbara Duffield, the Washington-based policy director for the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth.

Cincinnati Public Schools have seen a 28 percent increase – 266 more kids than last year, says Karen Fessler, manager of the district's Project Connect for homeless students. Her program is short-staffed, and a local nonprofit that supports schoolchildren's immediate needs is hitting hard times, too. "You hear about the bailout," Ms. Fessler says, "and you wonder, when is this actually going to trickle down to the individual families we're serving?"

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The Boston Globe **Youths propel a push toward volunteerism** **11.24.08**

Scott Helman

Change predates Obama's overtures

LEOMINSTER - President-elect Barack Obama rode a spirit of civic engagement among young people to victory, harnessing a hunger for service and belonging that

was sweeping across the nation's high schools, college campuses, and online communities.

But that hunger had been building long before Obama launched his campaign, and it is poised to continue growing long after he has left the White House.

By many accounts, the interest and participation in public service, volunteerism, and social entrepreneurship among youth - from middle-schoolers to graduates with advanced degrees - have risen dramatically over the last decade.

Today's teenagers and young adults, thanks to encouragement from their baby boomer parents, an Internet revolution that makes the world feel smaller every day, and a growing number of service and nonprofit-career preparation programs at colleges, are far more likely than their predecessors to seek out ways to give back and to shape the world they will inherit.

"Volunteerism is becoming a culture," said Sejal Hathi, a 17-year-old high school senior from Fremont, Calif., who founded an organization, Girls Helping Girls, to empower females around the world.

This service ethic is evident nationwide - inspiring middle-school students to raise arts scholarship money for their needy peers; driving college students to craft programs combating youth violence and promoting small loans to entrepreneurs; and moving 20- and 30-somethings to create internationally focused nonprofit organizations.

The trend is difficult to precisely measure, as volunteerism and public service take so many forms, and there are some data suggesting otherwise. But there are signs everywhere of increased participation and interest among youth.

American teenagers today are 100 percent more likely to volunteer than teenagers in the last few decades, federal research shows. A record 68 percent of K-12 schools offer or recognize service opportunities for students, according to a study by the Corporation for National and Community Service, a government agency, which also reports a 69 percent increase in applications to the AmeriCorps program over the last four years. A survey by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute found that two-thirds of students entering college in 2006 felt that helping others in need was essential or very important, the highest rate in 26 years.

One widely cited visionary is Wendy Kopp, who 20 years ago founded Teach For America, which sends top college graduates to teach in disadvantaged schools. Early on, she said, people laughed at her vision.

"What I ran into everywhere was the reaction that, this is a great idea, but it will never work because college students would never want to do it," she said.

They're not laughing anymore. In 2000, Teach For America was averaging 3,000 to 4,000 applications a year. This academic year, the organization received 25,000, and it's on pace to beat that figure by 50 percent next year.

Locally, the number of public service student groups at Harvard University has nearly tripled since 2002-03. Northeastern University has added classes on nonprofit management and bulked up its alternative spring break program, which pairs students with service projects. In 2003, the program put six students on one trip;

last spring, it sent 90 students on 10 trips, and that's expected to grow further in 2009.

"Students are coming in with more experience serving their community, and we're really building off their interest as well as our own," said Kristen Simonelli, associate director of Northeastern's Center of Community Service.

Youth have been active in causes for decades, of course, but specialists say their participation is taking a different form, partly because of their greater exposure to world problems through the Internet, including websites such as Facebook's Causes, whose popularity has exploded. Steven Culbertson, president and CEO of Youth Service America, noted that young people have grown up with the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, high-profile, catastrophic natural disasters, and the increasingly apparent threat of climate change.

"They've moved beyond planting tulips and painting murals to really engage on some of the biggest problems facing the world," Culbertson said.

One catalyst for youth activism, specialists say, is a shift in mindset among adults, who are more willing to see teenagers as assets to society. A pioneer in this movement is Bill Drayton, who in 1980 founded a group called Ashoka, which aims to give youth the tools to be "change-makers" in their communities. Indeed, the exercise of young people engaging in public service, which specialists say leads to lifelong civic participation, is sometimes more important than the often modest projects they take on.

"This is like language," Drayton said. "A child that grows up in a family with a small vocabulary is crippled for life. The same thing is true for these fundamental social skills that are essential in a world of escalating change."

The Leominster area has become a hotbed of youth activism, with hundreds of area students involved in a host of service programs, thanks partly to a partnership with Drayton's Youth Venture organization. Lizzy Marquis, 13, is one of several eighth-graders helping build an outdoor classroom at her Sky View Middle School. Today the site is just a muddy patch on a hillside, but the classroom, called Hawk's Nest, is slated to open next fall.

"When we're older, say we're 16, 17, 18, and we come back to the school, we can say, 'We did this,' " Marquis said.

At the other end of the age spectrum is Nina Dudnik, a 32-year-old with a doctorate in genetics. While at Harvard Medical School, she married her love of science with a calling for humanitarian work, starting - with like-minded students - an effort to ship surplus equipment to needy labs around the world. The initiative became a nonprofit called Seeding Labs.

Dudnik has helped stock 22 labs in 13 countries and hopes to eventually equip 100. Her ultimate goal is to put herself out of business - to help the world's scientists get to where they no longer need handouts.

"What I really want to do is change the map of where science is done, and the sustainability of science around the world," she said.

Not all trends on youth involvement in public service are positive. Specialists say students from disadvantaged backgrounds - including many in minority communities

- often lack access to such opportunities. And one government study showed that service-learning opportunities in K-12 schools has declined since 1999, which some specialists fear reflects an increased focus on standardized testing.

"In many schools as a result, there's been a narrowing of the curriculum," said Susan Root, research director for the National Youth Leadership Council.

Overall, though, specialists say that there's an unmistakable rise in civic awareness among young people, and that Obama's victory is a validation of that. He's going to need to draw on that spirit: The president-elect is facing challenges graver than perhaps any incoming president in 75 years. Obama's message to young people, Culbertson said, was this: "I want you to fall in love with the problems of the world and help me solve them, not shun them."

Drayton and his peers expect that love to endure.

"Once you have tested the fact that you can change the world," he said, "no one can take that away from you."

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Omaha World-Herald Clinics based in schools called healthy first step 11.24.08

Michaela Saunders

A child's physical health can't be separated from his or her behavioral health. And health can't be separated from the child's academic performance.

That's why bringing health care to children, through their schools, makes sense to the public-private Building Bright Futures initiative.

"All of us have one thing in mind — to improve the health and well-being of all of our kids here in Omaha," said Dr. Rubens Pamies, who directed the initiative's health task force. "No one can stay on the sideline. If we're going to do this, everyone has to stay involved."

Pamies, vice chancellor of academic affairs at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, outlined this morning how a school-based health delivery network could work for the Omaha area.

Pamies said the program will be piloted in one middle school and three elementary schools. The schools were not named today but have been selected.

Turning metro area schools — especially those that serve large numbers of students from uninsured and low-income families — into a first point of contact for physical, oral and mental health care was among the plans announced this morning at a public meeting at the Doubletree Hotel in downtown Omaha.

"It's a big, bold idea," John Cavanaugh, executive director of the public-private effort to ensure that more children graduate from high school, said last week in an interview. And, he said, "as many providers as are willing to participate" will be needed to guarantee that every child has access to quality care.

The need is clear. Building Bright Futures has determined that in Douglas and Sarpy Counties there are 82,000 children without regular health care providers, 17,000 children without health insurance and 1,321 children who missed school last year because they didn't have their immunizations.

Nebraska's safe haven law exposed the need for family support services. Before the revised law went into effect last week, 36 children — most of them adolescents — from Nebraska and elsewhere were left by their parents at hospitals and a police station.

Addressing a child's health needs — from untreated mental health concerns to undiagnosed vision problems — will go a long way to helping that child meet the academic markers that Building Bright Futures expects of them.

Building Bright Futures, backed by some of Omaha's wealthiest and most education-minded residents, started its work in 2006. Much of the past year was spent getting community input in six broad areas and establishing the first steps.

When each of the plans is fully implemented more than five years from now, those involved expect to see major reductions in the academic achievement gap between low- and middle-income students and between students of color and their Caucasian peers. And those involved expect that hundreds more students will graduate ready for a productive future.

Community involvement is crucial to the effort's success, Cavanaugh and others say.

"We've got to look at what the needs are. The needs of our kids and our community," said Dr. Richard O'Brien, who also directed the initiative's task force. He is a Creighton University professor in the Center for Health Policy and Ethics.

"There needs to be a place and professionals who can deliver that care — and a means of assuring that they have access to that (care) that is not hindered by a lack of insurance," O'Brien said. President-elect Barack Obama pledged during his campaign to insure every child, but metro area youths shouldn't have to wait for seismic shifts in national policy, say those involved in Bright Futures.

The first steps of Bright Futures' health plan will be updating information and establishing a hot line so families can be directed to existing services that will meet their needs. Many Omaha-area agencies already are providing health services to needy families, but the system can be difficult to navigate.

In five years, Cavanaugh said, the goal is to have health services in every metro area school.

School health clinics exist in many communities around the country today and have been in place in Omaha for short stints.

"It works well in places where it's been embraced and established," said Richard Brown, chief executive of the Charles Drew Health Center.

The center ran school-based clinics at OPS and Westside elementary schools for a while. Getting families to think of school as a place to get quality health care was challenging, he said, but consistency and communication would help.

The services provided included physicals; flu shots; treatment for headaches, colds and other common illnesses; and referrals. Those clinic-style services are much broader than what school nurses can provide today.

In the Omaha district, for example, 65 registered nurses are on staff. About one-third of them travel between two or three schools. The nurses address everyday ailments and provide screenings at specific grade levels for students' vision, hearing, blood pressure, height, weight, scoliosis and other things.

Louise Barr typically spends Monday mornings treating stomachaches, headaches and sore throats in the health office at north Omaha's Skinner Magnet Center.

It's a big day for school nurses. They see students who may have had a minor injury or come down with something over the weekend.

"A lot of students come in to me in the morning and say, 'My mom told me to go see the nurse,'" said Barr, a registered nurse who has worked for the Omaha Public Schools for 23 years. "I think they (parents) do like to use me as a first line" to determine if a child needs to see a doctor.

O'Brien said it's good that school nurses provide help with everyday ailments and screenings, but many other types of screenings could be done if there were more resources. That's where school-based clinics could serve as a first line of defense.

The health professionals agreed that the most important aspect will be building relationships and trust with families.

Pamies said: "Together, there's no question we're going to make a difference."

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The Washington Post In transition Education Secretary 11.25.08

Editorial Board

Joel I. Klein

Current job: New York schools chancellor

Credentials: Leader of the nation's largest school system since 2002, Klein helped New York win the 2007 Broad Prize for Urban Education. The award cited outside gains in reading and math test scores for economically disadvantaged, African American and Hispanic students. From 1997 to 2001 he was assistant attorney general in charge of the Justice Department's antitrust division.

What he offers: Klein, 62, led the antitrust case against Microsoft in the Clinton administration. He was an unconventional pick six years ago to head the 1.1 million-student New York district. Klein is known as a crusader for reform, and the reputation of the city's schools is on the rise.

Vetting: Some educators have criticized a Klein initiative to give schools letter grades based on test score gains and other factors. Of 284 high schools graded this month, 12 percent earned C's, 3 percent D's and 2 percent F's.

Quote: "Nothing is more important to cities, indeed to our nation, than ending decades of neglect and dysfunction in our public schools," Klein wrote in 2007, vouching for mayoral control of big-city schools. "Mayors are our most important city leaders, and they should be at the helm of this most important city responsibility."

Colin L. Powell

Current job: Retired Army general

Credentials: Powell is a household name for his tenure as secretary of state from 2001 to 2005 and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1989 to 1993. Outside of government he has taken a strong interest in education and youth issues. In 1997 he was founding chairman of the America's Promise Alliance, an organization that works with corporations, charities and communities to encourage volunteerism to help disadvantaged youth.

What he offers: Powell, 71, would bring extraordinary prestige and government savvy to a department that ranks low among Cabinet agencies, and he would draw instant attention to his pet causes, such as reducing the high school dropout rate.

Vetting: The former top Bush administration official would help put a bipartisan stamp on an Obama Cabinet. But even though his name has been floated for education secretary, he has relatively little experience in the nitty-gritty of school reform.

Quote: "We don't hear much about America's children in our national economic debate," Powell wrote this week in Roll Call. "But they are intricately connected to the dire economic consequences we face as a nation -- and their well-being must be a critical part of the solution."

Arne Duncan

Current job: Chicago schools chief executive

Credentials: From 1992 to 1998, Duncan was director of the Ariel Education Initiative to help create educational opportunities for children in the South Side of Chicago. He then became deputy chief of staff for the nation's third-largest school system and in 2001 was named its chief executive. Duncan played professional basketball in Australia from 1987 to 1991.

What he offers: Duncan, 44, has drawn praise for his seven-year run atop a district with more than 400,000 students. His Chicago connections presumably would help give him access to Obama, and he would have clout among educators who, like him, have carried out the No Child Left Behind Act as Congress considers revising it.

Vetting: Duncan supported a plan this fall to start a "gay-friendly" high school, but the idea was recently postponed.

Quote: "The only reason I do this job is I want Chicago to become the best big-city school district in America," Duncan told an interviewer in 2005. "I'm absolutely convinced we have a real chance to do that in the years ahead by continuing to challenge people's expectations -- students, teachers, parents -- not accept mediocrity and push for the best."

The Miami Herald
Miami-Dade schools chief Alberto Carvalho: Schools deserve bailout, too
11.25.08

Kathleen McGrory

With the state facing a potential \$1.4 billion tax shortfall, Miami-Dade Schools chief Alberto Carvalho called on the federal government to consider a bailout for the nation's public schools.

"The question in my mind is this: At a time when we're continuing the bailout of key industries, at what point do we have a bailout of public education?" asked Carvalho.

His bid for a bailout is unlikely to get Congress to cut a check, but it does illustrate the dire budget crunch facing school districts.

Carvalho said the state tax shortfall could mean an additional \$65 million reduction in spending for the Miami-Dade school system, the nation's fourth largest. The district has already cut \$289 million from its \$5.5 billion budget -- and was planning to slash \$36 million more in the coming weeks.

"We have to prepare for the very worst," Carvalho said.

Broward Superintendent Jim Notter said he could "absolutely" support a bailout of public education.

"Some place between the federal government and the state government, we need to stand tall and protect the public schools," he said.

Congress approved a Wall Street rescue plan in early October. Since then, General Motors, Ford and Chrysler have asked that some of that money be set aside for loans to the struggling auto industry. The federal government also decided to invest an additional \$20 billion in Citigroup.

Some municipal leaders, too, are seeking a share of the bailout.

Last week, three big-city mayors -- Michael Nutter of Philadelphia, Shirley Franklin of Atlanta and Phil Gordon of Phoenix -- asked the federal government for a portion of the rescue plan.

Palm Beach County Commission Chairwoman Addie Greene has also called on Congress for help.

`STRATEGIC'

With all these requests for additional federal dollars, the Miami-Dade schools chief suggests Congress should look at one more: additional funding to public schools throughout the nation.

"The most commonly heard solution out of Washington these days is a bailout where the federal government intervenes to safeguard key industries and in the process, the quality of American life," he said. `` If that's the rationale, than I cannot think of a more strategic investment than safeguarding the quality of public education."

But Michael Connolly, an economics professor at the University of Miami, said there's a fundamental difference between bailing out a private industry and offering additional funding to public schools.

Public schools have "already been bailed out because they are public," Connolly said. ``They don't need what I would call another bailout. They aren't private."

He added: ``If the Florida school system goes down the drain, it will make no difference to the U.S. economy. If we have AIG or Citicorp fail, then we have a systemic failure in our financial system. Everybody goes down."

`DIRE SERIOUSNESS'

U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Republican, said the mood of the Congress "is not in favor of any other bailouts." In an e-mail to The Miami Herald, she added: ``This does not take away from the dire seriousness of the financial straits that our public schools are facing."

Nationally, Florida ranks in the bottom quarter in terms of spending per student, according to the U.S. Census.

Following last week's news that the state will take in \$1.4 billion less in tax collections than anticipated this summer, Gov. Charlie Crist said he will likely call for a special session. He has not said when that might be.

Carvalho met with his top budget officials over the weekend to discuss the district's financial situation.

EFFECT IN CLASSES

Up to this point, Carvalho and his team have managed to keep most of the cuts away from the classrooms. But now, unless he gets an infusion, Carvalho says there will be no other choice.

It will be impossible to make many additional cuts to the administration, he said.

"There are certain areas where we cannot cut any deeper without compromising the financials of our school system," Carvalho said. ``I've cut the administration to the point where it is not a fat administration. Any additional cuts would have to be contemplated at the school sites."

Carvalho said it is too early to tell which programs would be considered for cuts. But he said the district is already combing its transportation and food-service budgets for savings.

BROWARD OPTIONS

Broward school administrators are looking at their budget, too. Notter predicts the school system will lose more than \$100 million in funding from Tallahassee over the course of the year.

He has said the district will likely need to layoff employees, though it was not clear which positions would be cut. "No public-school system is prepared for what we're faced with," Notter said. ``We've had too many deep cuts over the last three years."

Carvalho said he hopes to bring up his idea for a federal bailout to the Miami-Dade School Board and then to local elected leaders.

"This is a conversation we're going to initiate here in Florida," said Carvalho, adding that he planned to reach out to the Florida School Boards Association and the Florida Association of District School Superintendents. "It is my hope that it will reverberate in Washington."

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Chicago Tribune Taking aim at tenure 11.25.08

Editorial Board

Michelle and Barack Obama revealed Friday that their daughters will go to the private Sidwell Friends School when they all move to the White House. This was disappointing to the local teachers union, which had hoped the new First Parents would send their girls to Washington schools (as the Carters did to poor Amy) to show their faith in public education. Fat chance.

Though the Washington schools' per-pupil spending rate is among the nation's highest; its student test scores are among the lowest. Sound familiar? It's no mystery why Sasha, a 2nd grader, and Malia, a 5th grader, have attended the private University of Chicago Lab Schools.

Hired in 2007 to turn the Washington schools around, Chancellor Michelle Rhee jumped in with both feet, firing ineffective principals, closing schools and aggressively recruiting talented teachers. Now she has taken aim at teacher tenure and seniority—contract provisions that make it hard for schools to hire and keep good instructors or to get rid of bad ones.

Teacher pay is based almost exclusively on degrees held and years spent in the classroom, neither of which has proved to be a great predictor of student achievement. Teaching assignments are made largely on seniority, which channels the least experienced teachers into the most challenging jobs. The good teachers look for work elsewhere; the bad ones never leave.

Under Rhee's plan, teachers could voluntarily go on probation for a year, during which they could earn a huge bonus or be fired, depending on performance. If retained, they would qualify for higher salaries—up to \$131,000 a year after five years, which would make them among the highest paid in the country. Risk-averse teachers could choose to remain on the existing salary track and keep their tenure, but they wouldn't qualify for the big bucks. New teachers would come in under the merit plan. Seniority would carry little weight.

Washington Teachers Union members polled during the summer opposed the plan by about 3-1, and the union vice president has said that by voting for the proposed changes, teachers would be "slitting their own throats." What are they afraid of? We'll be willing to venture it's not the \$131,000 part. Teachers whose students are making adequate progress would have little to fear and much to gain—those are the very teachers Rhee wants to keep and reward.

Teachers say they worry that the evaluation process would rely too heavily on test scores or —pretty much the opposite—that principal favoritism would carry the day. They also say Rhee, a Teach For America alumna, is enamored of that organization's model, under which the best and brightest college grads are encouraged to work in struggling schools for a few years before moving on to their chosen (and generally more lucrative) careers. This approach, they say, attracts short-termers who would burn out quickly and undermines teaching as a long-term calling.

That's nonsense. What it would do is eliminate the senseless job protections for teachers who can't or won't do the very important work of educating kids. And it would provide incentives to help hire and keep the ones who will. It's a promising strategy that could help rescue the nation's most troubled schools—and we're not just talking about the ones in Washington.

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The Washington Post **Who's going to read books in the future?** **11.25.08**

Alan Cooperman (Op Ed)

It's a national scandal, or should be. After spending \$6 billion on a program to help First, Second and Third Graders learn to read, the U.S. Department of Education has concluded that the program isn't effective.

As the Washington Post's Maria Glod reported last week, the so-called Reading First program has been one of the centerpieces of the Bush administration's entire No Child Left Behind effort, and it appears -- as far as I can tell -- to be a complete bust: Students in the program scored no better on reading comprehension tests than students outside the program. That's a bit like saying that patients who took an experimental drug fared no better than those who took a placebo.

You can read the Department of Education's report for yourself. It's pretty conclusive. The department tracked the reading progress of tens of thousands of students in Grades 1-3 at nearly 250 schools across the country -- a huge sample, one of the largest studies it's ever done.

True, the department tries to put a positive spin on its findings with this globbledy-gooky summary paragraph:

"The results indicate that Reading First produced statistically significant positive impacts on multiple reading practices promoted by the program, such as the amount of instructional time spent on the five essential components of reading instruction and professional development in scientifically based reading instruction. Reading First did not produce a statistically significant impact on student reading comprehension test scores in grades one, two or three. However, there was a positive and statistically significant impact on first grade students' decoding skills in spring 2007."

OK, right. Using our adult "decoding" skills, we can decipher what that's saying: The schools that shared in the \$6 billion of Reading First funding devoted more teaching time to five skills deemed important in reading (awareness of individual sounds, phonics, vocabulary, reading fluency and comprehension). They also spent more money on training teachers. But what have they got to show for the increased

instructional time and the increased training? Nada. "No statistically significant" change in reading comprehension in any of the three grade levels.

Los Angeles Times
The true school scandal
11.25.08

Jonah Goldberg (Op Ed)

Hypocrisy is an overblown sin. Better to be a hypocrite who occasionally violates his principles than a villain who never does.

I bring this up because the usual, and entirely expected, round of conservative complaints about Barack Obama's public-schools hypocrisy have begun, and I'm finding it all a bit tedious.

The Obamas will send their two daughters to the expensive private school, Sidwell Friends. Yes, that makes him something of a hypocrite because he is a vocal opponent of giving poor kids anything like the same option.

But you know what? Who cares? Personally, I would think less of the Obamas if they sent their kids to bad schools out of some ideological principle. Parents' first obligation is to do right by their own kids.

In Washington, we have these arguments every time a rich Democrat sends his kids to private schools, which is very often. The real issue is why the public schools are unacceptable to pretty much anyone, liberal or conservative, who has other options. Maybe in the rich suburbs of New York or Los Angeles, wealthy opponents of school choice run less risk of being labeled hypocrites; they can skip the pricey private schools because their public campuses aren't hellholes.

But most Washington public schools are hellholes. So parents here -- including the first family -- find hypocrisy a small price to pay for fulfilling their parental obligations.

According to data compiled by the Washington Post in 2007, of the 100 largest school districts in the country, D.C. ranks third in spending for each student, around \$13,000 a pupil, but last in spending on instruction. More than half of every dollar of education spending goes to the salaries of administrators. Test scores are abysmal; the campuses are often unsafe.

Michelle Rhee, D.C.'s heroic school chancellor, in her 17 months on the job has already made meaningful improvements. But that's grading on an enormous curve. The Post recently reported that on observing a bad teacher in a classroom, Rhee complained to the principal. "Would you put your grandchild in that class?" she asked.

"If that's the standard," replied the defensive principal, "we don't have any effective teachers in my school."

So if Obama and other politicians don't want to send their kids to schools where even the principals have such views, that's no scandal. The scandal is that these politicians tolerate such awful schools at all. For anyone.

The main reason politicians adopt a policy of malign neglect: teachers unions, arguably the single worst mainstream institution in our country today. No group has a stronger or better organized stranglehold on a political party than they do. No group is more committed to putting ideological blather and self-interest before the public good.

Rhee has been pushing a new contract that would provide merit pay to successful teachers. The system is voluntary: Individual teachers can stay in the current system that rewards mere seniority or opt to join a parallel system that pays for superior performance. Many talented teachers would love the opportunity.

Alas, the national teachers unions insist that linking pay to results is an outrageous attack on the integrity of public schools. They have insisted that D.C. teachers not even be allowed to vote on the contract.

The Democratic Party continues to tolerate this sort of thing because public school teachers continue to be reliably liberal voters. And their unions cut big checks.

Obama, however, bragged about being different during his campaign. He declared himself independent from teachers unions and boasted his support for Rhee. But his recent appointment of Stanford professor -- and teachers union apologist -- Linda Darling-Hammond to head his education transition team is seen by many as a sign that reformers like Rhee can expect little support from the new White House.

And where are the Republicans? Well, if you want a good example of why hypocrisy isn't the worst thing in the world, just look at the GOP. Because the party supports school-choice vouchers, it's simply out of the debate. School choice has much to recommend it. But it's no silver bullet, and vouchers will never gain full acceptance in rich suburbs.

School choice does immunize Republicans from the charge of hypocrisy, however. So rich Republicans can send their kids to ritzy private schools without fear of violating their principles. Good for them. Unfortunately, their principled insulation also makes them largely irrelevant to a debate in which people like Rhee could use all the help they can get.

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Newsweek
What kind of Education Secretary will Obama pick?
11.26.08

Pat Wingert (Op Ed)

Though presidential candidates often say that education will be one of their top priorities, the job of education secretary is often among the last cabinet seats filled. While Barack Obama's transition team hasn't floated any names yet, the education establishment--reformers, teachers' unions, colleges and universities--has no shortage of candidates. What no one knows is whether Obama is leaning toward someone from the more innovative end of the reform movement (the group Democratic Rep. George Miller, who heads the U.S. House education committee, admiringly calls the "Disrupters") or a candidate with close ties to the teachers' unions. Long a key constituency in the Democratic party, the unions are now under attack by the Disrupters, who see teachers' protectiveness of tenure and seniority as

barriers to dramatic reform, particularly in failing urban schools.

The innovators, who have made key alliances with corporate donors and politicians eager for a faster pace of reform, want one of their own in the top spot. Their favorites include New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein, who has helped transform the country's biggest urban school system; Jon Schnur, the head of New Leaders for News Schools, who acted as an Obama surrogate during the campaign, Michelle Rhee, chancellor of the Washington, D.C. schools and founder of the New Teacher Project; Kati Haycock, the outspoken head of Education Trust, a nonpartisan powerhouse pushing for bold education reforms, or Wendy Kopp, who founded Teach for America, which funnels new graduates of prestigious colleges into hard-to-fill teaching positions.

The teachers' unions prefer someone like Linda Darling-Hammond, a professor of education at Stanford who acted as a surrogate for Obama during the campaign or former Gov. Jim Hunt of North Carolina, both reformers who have a long history of working respectfully with the unions on issues like increased teacher professionalism. There's even talk of Obama choosing one of their own, like Randi Weingarten, the savvy new president of the American Federation of Teachers.

During the campaign, Obama managed to convince both groups that he shared their vision of change. Teachers liked his criticism of the federal No Child Left Behind reform plan as inflexible and underfunded, and his promise that future reforms would be done with them, not to them. The innovators were encouraged by his shout-out to Rhee during the third presidential debate, his call for performance based pay for teachers and his enthusiasm for the expansion of charter schools. However, when Obama recently put Darling-Hammond in charge of his education policy transition group (immediately raising the perception that she was a candidate for the top job), there were howls of protest from the Disrupters, who fear a return to the more modest and incremental pace of reform that characterized the Clinton years.

What about someone who can bring both sides together? Names that come up in those conversations include former Secretary of State Colin Powell, who has long had an interest in education as well as programs benefiting disadvantaged youth; Arne Duncan, who is well known to Obama as chief executive of Chicago's public schools as well as a basketball-playing buddy, and Freeman Hrabowski, president of the University of Maryland-Baltimore County, an independent thinker who has been notably successful in attracting and graduating minority students in highly demanding college science and technology programs. Other governors getting buzz include Republican Tom Kean, former governor of New Jersey, former president of Drew University, and chairman of the 9/11 Commission, as well as Democrat Tim Kaine, the current governor of Virginia, who made Obama's short list for vice president.

If the country's economic woes slow down Obama's ability to boost education funding as promised, he may focus on someone who could wield the power of the bully pulpit as skillfully as Bill Bennett did during the early Reagan years. Powell and Hrabowski would both meet that criteria, while adding racial diversity to the cabinet.

Education Week
Professor is leading ed. policy review
11.26.08

David J. Hoff

Darling-Hammond was one of several Obama campaign voices on K-12.

President-elect Barack Obama made the first significant education appointment of his transition, naming a prominent education researcher and a frequently mentioned candidate for secretary of education to lead the review of federal education policy.

The appointment of Stanford University education professor Linda Darling-Hammond to the key transition role drew praise and criticism from different quarters of the Democratic Party.

Researchers and educators praised the appointment of Ms. Darling-Hammond, saying her expertise and background on improving teacher quality would inform the incoming administration's efforts to recruit and retain new teachers and the rest of its expansive agenda for pre-K through higher education. Some also would support her candidacy to be secretary of education, which has been the subject of speculation.

"It would be a breath of fresh air to have somebody in the Education Department who has been an educator," said Gerald E. Sroufe, the director of government relations for the American Educational Research Association. Ms. Darling-Hammond is a former president of the Washington-based group, which represents academic and professional researchers.

But her critics, who include Democrats who support aggressive accountability programs and the expansion of charter schools, say the Stanford professor is too wedded to seeking answers in the current K-12 and higher education systems and is not willing to experiment boldly with charter schools and alternative methods of recruiting or paying teachers.

"The role that the federal education folks need to play is leadership in pushing things forward, and sometimes taking risks," said Van Schoales, a program officer for the Piton Foundation, a Denver grantmaker supporting Colorado initiatives to improve urban schools.

Mr. Schoales said Arne Duncan, the chief executive officer of the Chicago school system and a friend of the president-elect, would offer that type of leadership as the secretary of education.

Democrats for Education Reform also has backed Mr. Duncan for the secretary's post. ("**Democratic Education PAC Hopes for Its Moment Under Obama**," this issue.)

Mr. Duncan backs charter schools such as KIPP—or the Knowledge Is Power Program—and the Teach for America program, which places recent college graduates who have no education credentials into urban and rural schools with teacher shortages.

"You hear [about Mr. Duncan's views] and it's like: Oh, yeah, that's what I thought we were getting," Mr. Schoales said in an interview.

Several other candidates are considered possibilities, including former North Carolina Gov. James B. Hunt Jr., who runs an institute on education leadership in his home state; retired Army Gen. Colin L. Powell, who with his wife, Alma, runs the America's Promise Alliance, which is addressing the high school dropout problem; and several current and former governors.

Whoever becomes the secretary of education will have to balance competing agendas within the Democratic Party. For the past several months, Democrats have engaged in a public debate over how much improvement should be expected of schools.

Balancing Act

One side—which includes Ms. Darling-Hammond—argues that the federal government needs to make substantial investments in providing health care, fighting poverty, and in funding other social programs as part of a school reform strategy. The other side—led by New York City Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein, who has also been mentioned as a potential education secretary—says schools could improve student achievement without the support of social programs, and that policymakers can do so by setting ambitious achievement goals and supporting charter schools.

During the campaign, an aide to Mr. Obama said the Illinois Democrat supports both approaches. ("**2 New Coalitions Seek Influence on Campaigns**," June 18, 2008.) Mr. Duncan was the only original co-signer of the statements each camp released in June.

Mr. Obama's campaign advisers represented views that spanned the debate.

Ms. Darling-Hammond spoke on behalf of the campaign at several high-profile events, including an Oct. 21 **debate** with Lisa Graham Keegan, the top education adviser to the campaign of Sen. John McCain of Arizona.

When Ms. Keegan pressed Ms. Darling-Hammond to voice support for Teach For America, Ms. Darling-Hammond responded: "I don't think that builds your profession."

Yet, Mr. Obama's team of advisers included several TFA alumni and supporters.

Since the election, though, Ms. Darling-Hammond has had the leading role speaking about education on behalf of the transition.

On Nov. 16, three days before she was formally appointed to her transition post, Ms. Darling-Hammond spoke at the Council of Chief State School Officers' annual meeting in Austin, Texas. In her speech, which was closed to the press, Ms. Darling-Hammond reviewed the president-elect's campaign proposals and promised he wouldn't cut education spending, according to a source who attended the event.

Two days later, she spoke at a session in Washington sponsored by the National Academy of Education, a select group of the top researchers in the field. Ms. Darling-Hammond is a member of the group.

In that speech, Ms. Darling-Hammond said the new administration would propose spending \$30 billion to pay for Mr. Obama's campaign proposals, which include \$10 billion a year to support states' pre-K programs, as well as teacher recruiting and retention efforts and tuition tax credits for future teachers and those willing to do 100 hours of community service.

Even though the programs would add new costs and reduce revenue for the federal budget during a financial crisis, the new administration considers the costs of the education plans small compared with the overall fiscal outlook.

"Thirty billion dollars is decimal dust in the federal budget," Ms. Darling-Hammond said.

She also reviewed the president-elect's campaign platform, repeating Mr. Obama's rhetoric from his campaign speeches. The platform includes efforts to recruit and retain new teachers, such as using teacher academies to prepare new teachers, creating opportunities for existing teachers to become mentors, and experimenting with new methods of paying teachers. ("**Presidential Hopes Weigh In on Education**," Oct. 22, 2008.)

It's unclear what role, if any, Ms. Darling-Hammond will have in the new administration. As the leader of a policy-review team, her peers include former Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle, who is reported to be the president-elect's pick to be the secretary of health and human services.

Ms. Darling-Hammond was unavailable to comment for this story.

President-elect Obama last week introduced his economic team—including Timothy F. Geithner as secretary of the Treasury. But he hadn't formally announced his choices for any other Cabinet post as of press time.

Although Ms. Darling-Hammond's name has surfaced as a potential education secretary, Mr. Sroufe of the AERA said a researcher and professor such as Ms. Darling-Hammond would be an unconventional choice. Past education secretaries have been former governors or others with significant administrative and political experience.

Despite her unorthodox background for such a position, Ms. Darling-Hammond would be a capable Cabinet secretary, he added.

"She would be a very able administrator of a large federal bureaucracy and she would bring change," Mr. Sroufe said. "There's no doubt about her abilities."

Staff Writer Michele McNeil contributed to this report from Austin, Texas.