



Headlines

4.23.08-5.1.08

Article	Date	Headline	Publication	Author
1	4.23.08	<u>Forum Seeks A New Vision for U.S. Role</u>	Education Week	David J. Hoff
		Excerpt: Congress and the next president need to offer a new vision for the federal role in K-12 education, creating a sustained effort to increase the quality of teachers, tailoring accountability systems to measure higher-order thinking, and ensuring that all spending is equalized across school districts, a report from a group of educators and researchers says.		
2	4.24.08	<u>A link to the future: UPLINK program provides positive after school alternative</u>	Molokai Times (HI)	Rachel Lau
		Excerpt: UPLINK, a statewide, federally funded after-school program, was designed for middle school students to foster their academic and social growths and help in the prevention of teen pregnancies, tobacco, alcohol and drug use.		
3	4.24.08	<u>Schools CEO seeks expert advice</u>	The Philadelphia Inquirer	Susan Snyder
		Excerpt: Incoming Philadelphia School District CEO Arlene Ackerman has commissioned a panel of 24 local and national experts to evaluate the district and make recommendations before the next school year.		
4	4.25.08	<u>City wonders: What should replace Safe and Sound</u>	Philadelphia Daily News	Catherine Lucey
		Excerpt: Mayor Nutter yesterday said		

that no children will be hurt by the surprise decision by Philadelphia Safe and Sound - a nonprofit organization that funnels money to after-school programs - to cease operations.

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| 5 | 4.25.08 | <u>Study Suggests Math Teachers Scrap Balls and Slices</u> | The New York Times | Kenneth Chang |
| | | Excerpt: Dr. Kaminski and her colleagues Vladimir M. Sloutsky and Andrew F. Heckler did something relatively rare in education research: they performed a randomized, controlled experiment. Their results appear in Friday's issue of the journal Science. | | |
| 6 | 4.26.08 | <u>After school program earns award</u> | Hillsdale Daily News (MI) | Erica Hobbs |
| | | Excerpt: The Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) awarded [Hillsdale's Gier Elementary School] with an Education Excellence Award for two of its math and science programs, "Astronomy and Mathematics-A Marriage Made in the Heavens," and "An Amazing Mathematical Tour," both taught by retired teacher Linc Miller. | | |
| 7 | 4.26.08 | <u>St. Paul's answer to cash crunch: sponsors</u> | St. Paul Pioneer Press (MN) | Jason Hoppin |
| | | Excerpt: Faced with a string of budget crunches, Minnesota's cash-strapped capital city is increasingly inking deals with private entities for services it otherwise couldn't afford. | | |
| 8 | 4.27.08 | <u>Steiny: An after-school haven for middle schoolers</u> | Providence Journal | Julia Steiny |
| | | Excerpt: With budget cuts and educators obsessing about test scores, the Providence middle schools have been pretty well stripped of virtually everything kids find fun — arts, field trips and afterschool sports. Before PASA, the city's public school adolescents left school only to enter a late-afternoon void with nothing to do, while many parents were still working. | | |

9	4.28.08	<u>Experts see impact of museums in science education efforts</u>	Associated Press Online	Malcolm Ritter
		Excerpt: This summer the National Academies, a congressionally chartered nonprofit group that advises the federal government, will release a report on what's known about the learning of science in such informal settings. That includes not only museums but also such places as zoos and aquariums.		
10	4.28.08	<u>In Pittsburgh, Reform Plan Includes Community Schools</u>	The Associated Press	
		Excerpt: Called the Lighthouse Project, the program represents the Pittsburgh public schools' first efforts to create "community" or "full service" schools that go beyond education to focus on students' health and welfare.		
11	4.28.08	<u>After the school bell rings</u>	The Boston Globe	
		Excerpt: MANY state lawmakers know that the proposed House budget doesn't satisfy the need for longer school days. Tough times require limits on new spending, but not in the one area of education reform that is getting students, teachers, and parents to sit up and pay attention.		
12	4.29.08	<u>Editorial: More time for learning</u>	GateHouse News Service	
		Excerpt: There are many paths to better education, and all come with a price tag. The most exciting school reform initiative in Massachusetts today starts with something simple: more time to learn.		
13	4.29.08	<u>Project Aims to Tackle Dropout Problem, California-Style</u>	Education Week	
		Excerpt: Improving California's education data system is often recommended as one of the first steps toward tackling the many troubles facing schools in the nation's largest state. And right up near the top of that list of problems is the high school dropout rate.		

14	4.29.08	<u>The Ultimate Reality Show</u>	Education Week	Ellen V. Futter
		Excerpt: Our nation is lagging further and further behind. U.S. students typically score below the midpoint on comparative international measures of science achievement in grades K-12, and only 15 percent of U.S. college students end up majoring in either the natural sciences or engineering. By comparison, fully 50 percent of China's university students graduate with degrees in engineering and the sciences.		
15	4.29.08	<u>Officials taking a long look at extended school days</u>	Herald News (MA)	Will Richmond
		Excerpt: The path is marked and goals are in reach, but for all students in the city's public school system to participate in the Expanded Learning Time program, it's going to take money.		
16	4.30.08	<u>Fenty Warns Against Plan to Transfer School Funds</u>	The Washington Post	Nikita Stewart
		Excerpt: D.C. Mayor Adrian M. Fenty said art and after-school programs planned for this fall could be cut if council members transfer \$18 million out of the public schools budget and into the school modernization spending plan.		
17	4.30.08	<u>Cross-Agency Project Tracks Students' Date to Tackle Policy Issues</u>	Education Week	Lynn Olson
		Excerpt: Many students receive services from other public and private agencies besides schools. But educators typically lack access to data about those experiences or how they shape young people's lives.		
18	4.30.08	<u>Health Care Industry Tried to Attract Youth</u>	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	Anya Sostek
		Excerpt: The Jewish Healthcare Foundation and the United Way of		

Allegheny County announced a new initiative yesterday aimed at exposing at-risk middle school students to careers in the health care industry.

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| 19 | 5.1.08 | <u>Our View: Invest in education, 05-01-08</u> | The Herald News (MA) | |
| | | Excerpt: One sure way to improve education is to increase the amount of time spent educating. But Expanded Learning Time has so far been limited to just 18 Massachusetts schools — three in Fall River — as the necessary state funds are hard to come by in these trying economic times. | | |
| 20 | 5.1.08 | <u>Music can be path to language and math</u> | Associated Press | Nancy Zuckerbrod |
| | | Excerpt: The challenge was to come up with an idea that can transform public education, particularly in poor communities. The winner: an educator with a passion for making school fun. | | |
| 21 | 5.1.08 | <u>Bloomberg Touts School Program</u> | Brooklyn Downtown STAR | Henrick A. Karoliszyn |
| | | Excerpt: Bloomberg came to promote the Out-of-School Time (OST) initiative that began in 2005. The \$200 million deal provides a mix of academic, recreational, and cultural activities for young people after school, during holidays, and throughout the summer | | |

[Article 1](#)

[Top](#)

**Education Week
Forum Seeks A New Vision for U.S. Role
4.23.08**

David J. Hoff

Congress and the next president need to offer a new vision for the federal role in K-12 education, creating a sustained effort to increase the quality of teachers, tailoring accountability systems to measure higher-order thinking, and ensuring that all spending is equalized across school districts, a report from a group of educators and researchers says.

“The federal strategy of attempting to improve schools through mandates and sanctions cannot get us where we need to go,” the Forum for Education and

Democracy says in the report, which was scheduled for release April 23 in Washington.

Instead, it argues, the government should do what other countries with high student achievement do. That would mean making “substantial investments in teacher training,” holding states accountable for equitably financing schools, and using assessments that foster “critical thinking and problem-solving” in the curriculum, the report says.

“It asks the federal government to take a leadership role in public education,” George Wood, the forum’s executive director and the principal of Federal Hocking High School in Stewart, Ohio, said of the report. In the forum’s conception of such leadership, the federal government would back off prescribing the types of tests states must use—something it is “uniquely unqualified to do,” Mr. Wood said in an interview—and establish systems to improve the quality of teachers and create incentives for states and districts to equalize their resources.

The expansive vision would cost an extra \$29 billion a year, the report says, a 75 percent increase over the \$38.2 billion fiscal 2008 budget for K-12 programs in the U.S. Department of Education.

“What we’re talking about is an asterisk” in the total federal budget, said Linda Darling-Hammond, a professor at Stanford University’s school of education, who edited the report with Mr. Wood. “It is tiny in terms of where we are putting our money. But it is huge in the pay out on the investment.”

Timed to be issued the same week as the 25th anniversary of the release of the 25th anniversary of the release of *A Nation at Risk*, the Forum for Education and Democracy report argues that the United States has failed to respond adequately to that influential 1983 federal report’s call to improve the quality of the nation’s schools.

Instead, the new report argues, other countries have improved their elementary and secondary education systems, while the achievement of U.S. students has stagnated or declined on international exams, mostly because the country has not ensured a high-quality teaching force or distributed resources equitably.

Evolution or Revolution?

In “Democracy at Risk: The Need for a New Federal Policy in Education,” the forum says that 2009 would be an “ideal time to rethink the federal government’s role in education.”

With a new president in office and the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act likely to be Congress’ top K-12 priority, policymakers will be ready to engage in a substantive debate over the federal government’s role in elementary and secondary education, the group hopes. The 6-year-old NCLB law was scheduled for renewal in 2007, but efforts to revise it have stalled.

Federal Role Reimagined

Highlights of the Forum for Education and Democracy’s recommendations for expanding and improving the federal government’s role in K-12 policy:

IMPROVING TEACHING Offer incentives for teachers to work in tough-to-staff schools in areas with teacher shortages. Create opportunities for teachers to work together in “collegial learning opportunities.” Support the development of new pathways that recognize teacher expertise and encourage teachers to become mentors or coaches. Begin a national strategy to recruit new principals.

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES Encourage parents to be engaged in their children’s schools. Give parents a role in determining the school improvement efforts of their children’s schools. Create community schools that are “hubs of educational services” for children and families.

RESEARCH Identify promising practices and work to publicize them. Revise the National Assessment of Educational Progress to emphasize open-ended performance assessment and pay for state exams that measure “intellectually ambitious learning.” Give states money to expand their data systems.

FINANCES Increase federal funding for special education to 40 percent of schools’ costs of addressing the needs of students with disabilities. Provide states with incentives to provide “equitable opportunities to learn.” Give communities money for safe housing, health care, and other services to improve children’s success in school.

SOURCE: “Democracy at Risk”

Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., the chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, was scheduled to be one of several speakers at the forum’s news conference for the release of the report.

Federal policymakers almost certainly will be ready to do a thorough review of the NCLB law and other K-12 legislation, according to Washington observers. But Congress and the new president—Democrat or Republican—would be unlikely to be interested in making the dramatic changes recommended in the forum’s report, one experienced policy hand said.

“The tendency of policy is toward inertia, to maintain the same policy or add on to it incrementally,” said Jack Jennings, the president of the Center on Education Policy, a Washington group that has tracked implementation of the NCLB law.

In K-12 education, for example, Congress has changed direction only twice in the past 50 years, according to Mr. Jennings, who worked as an aide to House Democrats on education issues from 1967 through 1994. The first was when it passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965, during the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson. The ESEA created the Title I program for disadvantaged students—the largest federal K-12 program.

The next time was when Congress required states to adopt standards for student performance in the 1994 version of the ESEA, Mr. Jennings said. In passing the latest version of the ESEA, the No Child Left Behind law—championed by President Bush—in 2001, Congress put more teeth into the law by requiring states to hold schools accountable for meeting goals for student performance in reading and mathematics.

Mr. Jennings' organization has convened a group of researchers to evaluate federal efforts to improve schools and recommend whether the federal law should be just tinkered with or totally overhauled.

One staunch supporter of the NCLB law said major changes are unlikely. Congress may be ready to amend the accountability rules and add efforts to improve states' curricula, but it is unlikely to rewrite the law or add major new provisions, said Kati Haycock, the director of the Education Trust, a Washington nonprofit that lobbies for improving the educational opportunities of disadvantaged children.

"I see this [ESEA reauthorization] as evolutionary, rather than revolutionary," said Ms. Haycock.

Critical Voices

The Forum on Education and Democracy is a group of scholars and practitioners who have been critical of the No Child Left Behind law and other efforts to hold schools accountable based on student test scores. Its members include Ms. Darling-Hammond, who is advising the presidential campaign of Sen. Barack Obama, D-III.; Theodore R.Sizer, a former dean of Harvard University's graduate school of education and a prominent author and school reformer; and Wendy D. Puriefoy, the director of the Washington-based Public Education Network.

The 4-year-old group is based in Stewart, Ohio, where it has one employee helping Mr. Wood, who is the volunteer executive director.

"Democracy at Risk" is the group's first comprehensive statement on what it believes is wrong with federal policy and what can be done to fix it.

The NCLB law has "generated much-needed attention to inequalities," but its emphasis on using tests to rate schools has been ineffective, the forum's report says.

"Rather than developing schools' capacity to improve their practice," it says, "NCLB has substituted test-based sanctions as remote controls for micromanaging schools."

In implementing the law, states have relied mostly on tests that measure low levels of knowledge and skill, the report says. Because the test scores are used to determine a school's standing under the law's accountability system, schools have responded by teaching to those tests, the forum says.

High-achieving countries have assessments that "require students to conduct research and scientific investigations, solve complex real-world problems in mathematics, and defend their ideas orally and in writing," the report says. "This focuses students' and teachers' attention on the skills that democracy, higher education, and 21st-century jobs will require."

Those countries, it says, also ensure that schools have the resources they need so that students have the opportunity to learn the challenging material and demonstrate the advanced skills that appear on those tests.

The main source of that opportunity, it says, is in high-quality teaching.

Countries with high achievement have developed their teaching corps by offering high-quality preparation, equalizing teacher pay at levels on a par with those of other professionals, and offering teachers up to 20 hours a week for planning or professional development.

Equity Efforts

The forum also calls for the federal government to set policies that would ensure that high-quality teachers are available in all schools, especially in those with a lot of disadvantaged students.

But that would be only one sign that a state or district was offering students an “opportunity to learn,” the report says.

The federal government also should measure whether all schools have high-quality teachers. And it should determine whether all schools have challenging curricula and equitable distribution of money for schools, the forum says.

To hold states accountable for doing so, it recommends, the federal government should determine a state’s eligibility for federal funds by its progress in meeting such opportunity-to-learn standards.

That recommendation revisits a major policy debate.

In 1993, Democrats in Congress wanted states to meet opportunity-to-learn standards under the Goals 2000: Educate America Act—the school reform bill proposed by President Clinton. Congress rejected the proposal because states contended it would put too much power in federal hands.

Mr. Wood argued that the six years of experience in implementing the NCLB law has shown policymakers that the nation needs to distribute resources equitably so schools have equal chances of increasing student achievement. The federal government should set goals for equalization that states would have to meet in their opportunity-to-learn standards.

“People now get that this is heavy lifting,” he said. “If you don’t [equalize resources], verbiage like ‘no child left behind’ is empty.”

Because of limits on federal spending, Congress is unlikely to approve any significant increases in K-12 spending, said Ms. Haycock, who had not read the report.

“There’s not going to be boatloads of money” in future years, she said.

Article 2

Top

Molokai Times (HI)

A link to the future: UPLINK program provides positive after school alternative

4.24.08

Rachel Lau

When the final bell rings at 2 p.m. for Keano Pascua-Kaho'okano, the rest of his school day has just begun.

Keano is an eighth grade student at Molokai Middle School. Along with 30-40 schoolmates, he completes each day with three hours of UPLINK.

UPLINK, a statewide, federally funded after-school program, was designed for middle school students to foster their academic and social growths and help in the prevention of teen pregnancies, tobacco, alcohol and drug use.

About 80 percent of current MMS students attend the program. None of them seem to mind the extra time. "The last couple of hours are fun," Keano said with a wide grin. He is completing his second year in UPLINK.

A Brief Background

In 2003, Lt. Governor "Duke" Aiona, with concerns about the growing "ice" (Methamphetamine) epidemic, attended community forums throughout the state trying to discover the root causes of the issues.

He found that middle-schoolers lacked after-school programs that taught them positive values. Under his initiative, the state created UPLINK ("Uniting Peer Learning, Integrating New Knowledge") and gave every middle school a chance to participate.

In 2004, MMS became the first school in Hawaii using the UPLINK program. It can now be found on every island.

Covering all the bases

Every afternoon begins with a snack break followed by mandatory study hall sessions where each student receives help with school assignments. They then participate in a 30-minute CORE Concepts class where they are taught leadership and life skills.

Then the group breaks into extra-curricular activities including both local and gourmet cooking classes, hip-hop and hula dance classes, videography lessons, sports and more.

Lyn Bonk, director of UPLINK, said the program is not based on academics, which would not reach as many at-risk students. Instead, they choose activities to attract the students.

"Any successful program has to be able to be flexible in both its design and in its ability to meet the needs of its students or customers," she said.

Abigail Adachi, seventh grade, says she enjoys all the activities offered. She is currently learning how to cook local food and is practicing for a May Day hula show. Keano is preparing for his upcoming volleyball tournament in Maui. Both of them, however, claimed study hall to be the best part of UPLINK.

"When I was in sixth grade, I didn't really get that much help in my homework and so I kind of got bad grades," said Abigail. She said her grades have now been improving as she receives help from her study hall tutor.

CORE sessions, organized by Riley Domingo, focus on teaching the students life values. A typical session might involve games or activities that incorporate values such as respect and communication. The program also recruits speakers from Molokai to discuss topics such as nutrition, entrepreneurship, and drug and alcohol prevention.

"We wanted not only to give students exposure to the information, but what is more critical for us is forming a relationship," Bonk said. She said she hopes that now students won't hesitate to contact these agencies in times of need.

Off island incentive trips

Every year, each class takes an off-island trip, which they earn through a point system. The trips are sponsored entirely by UPLINK.

Students earn points for good behavior, participating in CORE sessions, service projects and Family Night — a time for families to see their child's accomplishments at school. "We really believe that in order for a student to succeed, their family needs to be involved," Bonk said.

"They need to earn their way to go to these trips," Bonk said. "We don't want a sense of entitlement. It's the fact that you set a goal and it's achievable," she added.

The seventh grade class travels to Maui, while eighth graders visit Oahu.

Bonk said these trips are a significant part of UPLINK. It exposes the students to different places, such as college campuses.

"How else do we take the risk out of the decision to go to college? How do we make it seem doable if a student has never been exposed, truly, to an off-island experience?" Bonk said.

"We hope they are more capable of making [a choice] to support a successful life," Bonk added.

Tangible changes

"The reward is seeing the kids change and grow, said Hulu Joao, UPLINK's student and program manager, who has worked with the program since its beginning. "I think that's the reason why I stay," she said.

But proof of the program's success is most evident when the students themselves understand the changes it has made in their lives.

When asked the most important thing UPLINK has taught her, Abigail said without hesitation, "Respect. They teach you how to respect others and what respect means. I see a lot of kids improve."

"[UPLINK] can show you who you really are and bring out yourself," Keano said. "Most of the time, the teachers personally come up to you and talk about your attitude," he said.

"I learned that people can really change within a year. My friends changed a lot ... Worst enemies can become closer," he added.

Keano wants to be a doctor when he grows up. He says he has now learned he can accomplish anything.

The Philadelphia Inquirer
Schools CEO seeks expert advice
4.24.08

Susan Snyder

Incoming Philadelphia School District CEO Arlene Ackerman has commissioned a panel of 24 local and national experts to evaluate the district and make recommendations before the next school year.

The Transition Advisory Team, which began work yesterday, will evaluate the district in several areas, including teaching and learning, safety, public engagement, capacity building, resource allocation, and the outside groups managing nearly 40 of the district's 270 schools.

Among its participants are university professors; the district's two other finalists for the job of chief executive officer; former and current administrators from public schools in San Francisco, where Ackerman served as superintendent; and Gov. Rendell's budget secretary, Michael Masch, long rumored to be in line for a high-level district post.

Ackerman, who was in Philadelphia yesterday, also told reporters that she would:

Create an ombudsman office to deal with district complaints better.

Expand hours for all district offices. Beginning June 2, offices will be open from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Workers' schedules will be staggered to keep costs the same, Ackerman said.

Announce members of her administrative team the week of May 5.

Ackerman, who will begin her new job full-time June 1, said yesterday that the transition panel's main job would be to listen to parents, teachers and other district participants, and review existing reports on the 167,000-student system. Six public forums will be scheduled, along with private focus groups and other sessions.

"This is the first big step in listening and engaging the Philadelphia public, and I'm excited about this," she said. "They're going to help me sort of prioritize what are the things we need to start on right away."

Her theme for the new school year, she said, will be "Engaging Philadelphia Voices: Putting the P Back in Public Education." The effort appears to be a response to advocates who say the district has grown unresponsive to concerns, and to some complaints in San Francisco that Ackerman didn't involve parents enough in decision-making.

The transition-team effort will cost \$75,000 to \$100,000, which was negotiated when she was hired, Ackerman said. Each panel member will be offered a \$1,000-a-

day honorarium for the work, which is likely to span four days, she said. About half the participants declined the honorarium, she said.

The panel's local participants include Mayor Nutter's chief education officer, Lori Shorr, and Rendell policy adviser Donna Cooper. National education experts include Linda Darling-Hammond, a Stanford University education professor.

The panel is cochaired by Kent McGuire, dean of Temple University's College of Education since 2003, and Robert Peterkin, director of the Urban Superintendents' Program for the Harvard Graduate School of Education. McGuire was one of three finalists for the CEO job before withdrawing. Peterkin previously held school superintendent positions.

Leroy D. Nunery II, the other CEO finalist and a former executive for Edison Schools Inc., a for-profit education company, also is among the group.

Helen Gym of Parents United for Public Education questioned spending the money when district officials already knew what the problems were.

"It's not a matter of what do we know. It's a matter of what we're going to do about what we know," she said.

In a statement, School Reform Commission chairwoman Sandra Dungee Glenn called Ackerman's approach a "bold step" in helping to raise the district's performance another level.

These are the other members of the advisory panel:

Dan Katzir, managing director of the Broad Foundation; **Eloise Brooks**, former San Francisco Unified School District chief academic officer; **Patricia A. Harvey**, a former superintendent with the National Center for Education and Economy; **Jeffrey Henig**, a professor at Teachers College at Columbia University; **Michael Rebell** of the Campaign for Educational Equity at Columbia; **Warren Simmons**, executive director of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform; **Lorraine Monroe** of the Monroe Leadership Institute; **Jerry Jordan**, president of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers; **Sheila Simmons** of Public Citizens for Children and Youth; **Michael Casserly**, executive director of the Council of Great City Schools; **James Honan**, educational cochair of the Institute for Educational Management at Harvard; **Myong Leigh**, deputy superintendent of policy and operations for San Francisco schools; **Richard Elmore**, Harvard researcher and director of the Consortium for Policy Research in Education; **Andy Porter**, dean of the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education; **Lew Smith**, director of the National Principals Leadership Institute; **Karen Mapp**, former deputy of parent affairs for Boston public schools and a lecturer at Harvard; and **Deanna Burney**, a former Philadelphia schools administrator with the Annenberg Institute.

[Article 4](#)

[Top](#)

Philadelphia Daily News
City wonders: What should replace Safe and Sound
4.25.08

Catherine Lucey

Mayor Nutter yesterday said that no children will be hurt by the surprise decision by Philadelphia Safe and Sound - a nonprofit organization that funnels money to after-school programs - to cease operations.

"We will work extremely hard to make sure there is no disruption in service to children," Nutter said, promising a "smooth transition."

Safe and Sound, which distributes city dollars to several hundred community-based groups, decided this week to shut down June 30. The announcement came amid questions about the agency's fiscal management.

Exactly how things will unfold post-June 30 is unclear. The mayor's press office could not answer questions about whether another agency will take over then, or if there is a short-term transitional plan.

But while the deadline looms, the city is also trying to determine the best long-term plan for funding and overseeing after-school and anti-violence programs. And one key question is whether using a single nonprofit is the best strategy.

A city Safe and Sound assessment team gave recommendations to Nutter last week that included "taking a fresh look at whether this type of nonprofit entity is the most effective way to deliver child welfare and delinquency prevention services."

Nutter yesterday said that "every potential option and iteration is on the table and open for discussion."

Attorney Michael Schwartz, head of the six-person city assessment team reviewing Safe and Sound, said that his group plans to research how these services are offered in other cities - and will make recommendations to Nutter.

"We're looking to make recommendations on what is the best way to deliver these services that is efficient, looks out for the children and also is fiscally responsible," he said.

Nancy Peter, director of the Out of School Time Research Center at the University of Pennsylvania, said that most major cities vary in how they provide after-school programs.

Methods include using a nonprofit, or several nonprofits, working within city agencies or with the local school district, Peter said.

"One of the challenges for the city, which I think they're taking 150 percent seriously, is to look at these other systems and get a sense of how they work and how many of them might work in Philadelphia," Peter said.

Started in 1998, Safe and Sound ballooned under former Mayor John Street, who tried to increase its budget to \$75 million before leaving office.

When Mayor Nutter came into office, he cut \$21 million from its budget, saying that Council last year had approved \$54 million, not the \$75 million that Street had pushed through. Nutter later restored \$4 million.

Nutter also requested a study of Safe and Sound's management and financial practices by the state Department of Welfare and also by a local assessment team that he appointed.

The state review concluded that Safe and Sound had lax financial controls and doled out money to community-based providers without first signing contracts with them.

Earlier this week, the city announced that it was seeking proposals from agencies interested in the Safe and Sound administrative responsibilities.

Nutter said that he met with Safe and Sound board chairman Ernest Jones, Deputy Mayor Don Schwarz and Michael Pearson, a Nutter fundraiser recently appointed to the board, last week. At that meeting, he raised some of his concerns.

"I expressed my very strong concerns about the current operations and the leadership team there, and that we had already planned to put out the bid," Nutter said.

Safe and Sound held an emergency board meeting Monday and informed Nutter of plans to fold on Tuesday. *

[Article 5](#)

[Top](#)

The New York Times
Study Suggests Math Teachers Scrap Balls and Slices
4.25.08

Kenneth Chang

One train leaves Station A at 6 p.m. traveling at 40 miles per hour toward Station B. A second train leaves Station B at 7 p.m. traveling on parallel tracks at 50 m.p.h. toward Station A. The stations are 400 miles apart. When do the trains pass each other?

Entranced, perhaps, by those infamous hypothetical trains, many educators in recent years have incorporated more and more examples from the real world to teach abstract concepts. The idea is that making math more relevant makes it easier to learn.

That idea may be wrong, if researchers at [Ohio State University](#) are correct. An experiment by the researchers suggests that it might be better to let the apples, oranges and locomotives stay in the real world and, in the classroom, to focus on abstract equations, in this case $40(t + 1) = 400 - 50t$, where t is the travel time in hours of the second train. (The answer is below.)

"The motivation behind this research was to examine a very widespread belief about the teaching of mathematics, namely that teaching students multiple concrete examples will benefit learning," said Jennifer A. Kaminski, a research scientist at the Center for Cognitive Science at Ohio State. "It was really just that, a belief."

Dr. Kaminski and her colleagues Vladimir M. Sloutsky and Andrew F. Heckler did something relatively rare in education research: they performed a randomized, controlled experiment. Their results appear in Friday's issue of the journal *Science*.

Though the experiment tested college students, the researchers suggested that their findings might also be true for math education in elementary through high school, the subject of decades of debates about the best teaching methods.

In the experiment, the college students learned a simple but unfamiliar mathematical system, essentially a set of rules. Some learned the system through purely abstract symbols, and others learned it through concrete examples like combining liquids in measuring cups and tennis balls in a container.

Then the students were tested on a different situation — what they were told was a children’s game — that used the same math. “We told students you can use the knowledge you just acquired to figure out these rules of the game,” Dr. Kaminski said.

The students who learned the math abstractly did well with figuring out the rules of the game. Those who had learned through examples using measuring cups or tennis balls performed little better than might be expected if they were simply guessing. Students who were presented the abstract symbols after the concrete examples did better than those who learned only through cups or balls, but not as well as those who learned only the abstract symbols.

The problem with the real-world examples, Dr. Kaminski said, was that they obscured the underlying math, and students were not able to transfer their knowledge to new problems.

“They tend to remember the superficial, the two trains passing in the night,” Dr. Kaminski said. “It’s really a problem of our attention getting pulled to superficial information.”

The researchers said they had experimental evidence showing a similar effect with 11-year-old children. The findings run counter to what Dr. Kaminski said was a “pervasive assumption” among math educators that concrete examples help more children better understand math.

But if the Ohio State findings also apply to more basic math lessons, then teaching fractions with slices of pizza or statistics by pulling marbles out of a bag might prove counterproductive. “There are reasons to think it could affect everyone, including young learners,” Dr. Kaminski said.

Dr. Kaminski said even the effectiveness of using blocks and other “manipulatives,” which have become more pervasive in preschool and kindergarten, remained untested. It has not been shown that lessons in which children learn to count by using blocks translate to a better understanding of numbers than a more abstract approach would have achieved.

The Ohio State researchers have begun new experiments with elementary school students.

Other mathematicians called the findings interesting but warned against overgeneralizing. “One size can’t fit all,” said Douglas H. Clements, a professor of learning and instruction at the University of Buffalo. “That’s not denying what these guys have found, whatsoever.”

Some children need manipulatives to learn math basics, Dr. Clements said, but only as a starting point.

"It's a fascinating article," said David Bressoud, a professor of mathematics at Macalester College in St. Paul and president-elect of the Mathematical Association of America. "In some respects, it's not too surprising."

As for the answer to the math problem at the top of this article, the two trains pass each other at 11 p.m. at the midway point between Stations A and B. Or, using the abstract approach, $t = 4$.

Article 6

[Top](#)

Hillsdale Daily News (MI) **After school program earns award** **4.26.08**

Erica Hobbs

Hillsdale's Gier Elementary School has been recognized for its after-school enrichment program.

The Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) awarded the school with an Education Excellence Award for two of its math and science programs, "Astronomy and Mathematics-A Marriage Made in the Heavens," and "An Amazing Mathematical Tour," both taught by retired teacher Linc Miller.

The MSAB describes its Education Excellence Awards program as a way to "recognize innovative programs that contribute meaningfully to improved achievement and success for all its students." Candidates submitted their programs to one of eight different categories, ranging from math/science, language arts, and school development, and awards were given to the top three programs in the state for each category.

Of the hundreds of entries submitted, Gier was one of three recipients of the Education Excellence Award for "Improving Student Achievement in Mathematics and Science," and will be honored with an awards ceremony in Lansing on May 6.

The "Astronomy and Mathematics" course is offered in the fall to fifth-grade students who scored in the top 15 percent of their class in math and science on the MEAP test. "An Amazing Mathematical Tour," offered in the spring, is for exceptional math students and requires them to pass a difficult entry exam to be accepted.

"The program strives to provide some extra outlets for the talents that can go beyond the core curriculum," Gier Elementary School principal Scott Siakel said. "We really challenge students to think outside of the box."

Miller, who has developed approximately a dozen programs for students in his career, proposed the program to the school in 2006 as a way to challenge gifted students in math and science and encourage their interest in it.

Miller's fall astronomy and mathematics course is broken into seven sessions where students are exposed to different astronomical concepts including solar system components, cosmological structure, and orbital dynamics among others.

His spring math course is also divided in seven sessions and covers more advanced mathematical concepts for fifth graders with geometric growth, probability, exponents and computer math as some of its topics.

"I'm honored to be able to this program," Miller said. "It brings attention to the community that Hillsdale Schools responds to the needs of its enriched students."

Gier will continue to compete to win for "best in" category, the Michigan's Best Award. If it wins, the school will receive a presence at the MASB's fall concerence, an additional trophy and \$1,500 to enhance and maintain the program.

Siakel is very pleased with the recognition.

"It's just fantastic that we've won this Education Excellence Award," he said. "It validates that we offer something that is meeting a need that other districts may want to emulate."

Article 7

[Top](#)

St. Paul Pioneer Press (MN) **St. Paul's answer to cash crunch: sponsors** **4.26.08**

Jason Hoppin

St. Paul: Brought to you by (your name here).

Faced with a string of budget crunches, Minnesota's cash-strapped capital city is increasingly inking deals with private entities for services it otherwise couldn't afford, from the annuals planted outside City Hall to the Central Corridor project.

"There's a need to extend public resources by bringing in private and foundation resources," St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman said, adding that cuts to local government aid have forced the city to rethink how it delivers services. "We can just get a lot more done. ... Tough times call for innovation."

Some of the more recent agreements:

- St. Paul has accepted millions from charitable foundations for mayoral initiatives such as after-school programs, planning associated with the Central Corridor light-rail line and a downtown center for victims of domestic abuse.
- The city hopes to turn over operations of several recreation centers to various private groups to avoid closing them.
- And recently, the city struck a deal worth more than \$500,000 with Toyota Motor Corp. for cash and 10 leased vehicles, most of which are hybrid electric cars and give the city some environmental bona fides. In exchange, Toyota's logo will appear at several civic events, and the company has exclusive sponsorship rights to the coming Star of the North Games, the state's Olympics-style multi-sport event.

Deals to infuse some needed cash are nothing new in St. Paul. Xcel Energy paid \$80 million for the naming rights to the city's pro hockey arena. And in 2002, Como Park's conservatory was renamed for Marjorie McNeely after her estate donated \$7 million.

Since Coleman took office in 2006, his administration has racked up more than \$25 million in private donations to pay for everything from solar panels to dental seals for youths. Much of it is for a pilot early childhood scholarship program funded by the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation, but it includes more than \$2 million from the McKnight, St. Paul and F.R. Bigelow foundations for Central Corridor planning -- the mayor's avowed No. 1 priority.

But a cash crunch seems to be forcing St. Paul to look to corporations to cover ever-smaller expenses. The flowers outside City Hall are brought to you by Gertens, an Inver Grove Heights nursery that co-sponsors the \$176,000 Blooming St. Paul program -- a significant portion of which is privately funded.

Also, a summertime "Movies in the Park" program is sponsored by Comcast, and the city's graffiti-eradication program comes courtesy of Wagner, the power paint-sprayer company. Even this newspaper sponsors the city's bookmobile.

What's next? A swing set sponsored by McDonald's? Where is the line?

"That's continually being talked about," said Bob Bierscheid, the city's director of parks and recreation, whose department has struck many of the public-private partnerships. "We've had some people approach us with things that just didn't make sense."

Bierscheid is working on a handful of management agreements for city recreation centers -- Orchard, Dunning, Eastview, St. Clair and Desnoyer. Those deals would save the city \$662,000 and allow the centers to stay open as the city fights through a succession of bleak budgets.

But for some, partnering with private institutions brings back bad memories. In the late 1990s, then-Mayor Norm Coleman and then-state Sen. Randy Kelly orchestrated a 30-year lease of Valley Recreation Center to the Boys & Girls Club of St. Paul. The price? One dollar, due annually.

The problem was no one seemed to know about the deal until a Boy Scout troop got kicked off the fields. At the time, the Boys & Girls Club took the position that the fields were private and available only to its members -- a position the club revised when the deal was made public.

The center is now called the Mount Airy Boys & Girls Club.

Over the years, St. Paul has passed two key laws to make sure its parks stay open and available to the public. First came a "no net loss" law, stating that any parklands sold off must be replaced. The second, enacted after the Valley Rec Center controversy, gives the City Council power over park leases of one year or more. If the lease runs longer than five years, the city's provisions for no net loss of parks kick in.

Bierscheid said the agreements aren't the same as leases. The private institutions -- the Blackhawk Soccer Club at Orchard Rec Center and perhaps Arts-Us at Dunning, for example -- have a say over programming within the centers themselves and, in exchange, pay for facility operations.

But St. Paul still maintains the grounds. It also has covenants preserving the space for some groups, and if the rec center grounds aren't in use, it's still a public park --

the new managers can't charge membership fees to play a game of pickup basketball.

"With what we've been through with the budget cuts, the resources are not there if we didn't have the partnerships," Bierscheid said. "Typically, if we didn't partner, you would see a boarded-up building."

But St. Paul's history makes Peggy Lynch, with Friends of the Parks and Trails of St. Paul and Ramsey County, nervous. She said she does not want the agreements to become a giveaway of city parklands.

"That's what the law says, and that's what they have to abide by," Lynch said. "If they have programs, you can't be made to join a booster club to go play cards there. These are public facilities."

Bierscheid said the city has discussed limits on its partnerships.

The agreements "clearly have to serve a public purpose," Bierscheid said. "It can't be about the sponsor. It has to be about the community."

Jim Miller, executive director of the League of Minnesota Cities, said such agreements appear to be unusual around the metro area, but he cited rare examples such as a joint public-private health club at Shoreview's City Hall. More common, he said, are joint agreements between different levels of government to provide services -- something the league is in the process of exploring further.

Both have the same goal -- saving money. With tighter budgets, "people are just going to have to think about things like that," Miller said.

City Council President Kathy Lantry said the deals help ease the burden on city taxpayers. She said the council takes each agreement on a case-by-case basis, and there are limits.

"The difference," Lantry said, "is not having police cars that look like Pizza Hut delivery cars."

Article 8

[Top](#)

Providence Journal

Steiny: An after-school haven for middle schoolers

4.27.08

Julia Steiny

Kids are snacking at one of the lunch tables in the cafeteria shared by Highlander Charter School and New Urban Arts, an artists' studio. I hang out with the group that will attend classes in architecture or ceramics. Chatting at other tables are yet more middle school students getting a little social time before spending the next two hours painting, drawing and working in other media. This cafeteria is only one of many cafeterias around Providence where roughly 600 middle school kids gather after school, Monday through Thursday, to participate in activities they call the "After-Zone," organized by the Providence After School Alliance (PASA).

Also snacking with the kids at each table are at least two adults who are the teachers and leaders for the activities. So, getting to know these adolescents are librarians, police, coaches, artists, sailors and other people who know a cool skill that the kids want to learn. Through PASA, hundreds of city kids have two more caring adults in each of their lives.

I ask the architecture/ceramics group why on earth they'd rather go to another class instead of going home and goofing off? They waive away my cluelessness. Gabrielle says, "I wanted to learn how to make pots. I see people on TV spinning pots with their hands and it's cool. Also, in the After-Zone, you're safe and protected. If you go home, you might end up getting into a fight."

While walking to his classroom, Michael, who is taking an architecture class, explains, "I like that we can create anything we want as long as it's realistic. I don't like drawing with boundaries."

The students are each designing a dream house. They began by researching an architect of their choice and giving a little report to the rest of the class. They drew elevations for their house to see what it would look like, and from those they created floor plans using a quarter-inch-to-one-foot scale. PASA activities integrate academics, like reading, research and math, into the hands-on projects, both to reinforce skills and to impress the kids with the usefulness of the stuff they learn in school.

Michael's house has a long, stately avenue of palm trees leading to what looks to me like a palace, but he calls a mansion. He proudly points out the glassed-in pool in an atrium at the side of the house, as well as the outdoor pool labeled "Fountain of Youth."

Today the class is building architectural models of their houses, using foam boards and materials from the state recycling center. Michael is especially looking forward to installing his avenue of synthetic palm trees.

His instructor, Sara Ossana, says, "These students are learning things that I learned as a graduate student."

On this same day, other kids are in athletic programs run by the Providence police and the recreation centers. The Tennis Association adopted PASA as a pet project, and lends portable tennis nets and other equipment so kids can learn that sport. D.J. and musician Terrell Osborne teaches kids how to write, perform and record songs in his recording studio at Davey Lopes' recreation center. And this is only a small taste of the many offerings.

With budget cuts and educators obsessing about test scores, the Providence middle schools have been pretty well stripped of virtually everything kids find fun — arts, field trips and afterschool sports. Before PASA, the city's public school adolescents left school only to enter a late-afternoon void with nothing to do, while many parents were still working. Nationally, youth crime spikes between 2 and 6 p.m., a time also rich with opportunity for risky behavior, like sex and drugs, or for turning kids' minds to mush with TV and video games.

Even while still a candidate in 2002, Providence Mayor David N. Cicilline championed youth development and "community schools," which function as neighborhood

community centers instead of as educational fortresses. Drawing on Providence's deep pool of talent, the new mayor gathered artists, recreation directors, librarians, teachers and even police officers to begin building a public/private partnership to provide afterschool programming that would give kids a safe place to be. Cicilline wanted that dead, counter-productive afternoon time to come to life for the age group most often ignored by policymakers.

PASA director Hillary Salmons and her staff went to work making the program real by filling a master calendar with activities in five neighborhood-based After-Zones. PASA works with afternoon programs run by everyone, including remedial classes given by Sylvan Learning and the good work of the College Crusade. Even school-run homework clubs are part of the master schedule.

Salmons says, "Instead of competing, all the afterschool programs work together, because it's much more cost-effective for everyone." Furthermore, all the adults — agency directors, police and artists — take a 32-hour training that "puts everyone on the same page. We have a series of standardized protocols. We offer consistently high-quality programming, with the same positive youth-development messages, same format, schedule and transportation, but with plenty of flexibility within the groups so they can do whatever it is they do best. Together we learn how to solve problems and how to approach youth."

Initially parents worried about safety, but no longer. According to PASA surveys, parents are very satisfied with the program now. Kids don't have to be there, but participation is growing.

To my mind, the best part of PASA is how it connects kids to all kinds of grownups and opportunities in the community. The 32-hour training includes instruction in how to talk to students in this age group, who really can be tough to understand and engage. Now the recreation and arts centers report higher participation in their non-PASA activities, because the kids know the agencies and their staff. Kids tell their friends. And no single school could possibly offer boxing, hip-hop dance, print-making and yoga, as well as homework help. PASA can.

Here's hoping it can expand to the high schools next. This is community building at its best.

Julia Steiny, a former member of the Providence School Board, consults for government agencies and schools; she is co-director of Information Works!, Rhode Island's school-accountability project. She can be reached at julia.steiny@cox.net, or c/o EdWatch, The Providence Journal, 75 Fountain St., Providence, RI 02902.

[Article 9](#)

[Top](#)

Associated Press Online

Experts see impact of museums in science education efforts

4.28.08

Malcolm Ritter

Three or four times a day, a banana shows up at the Liberty Science Center and complains about a pain in its side. And that means it's time for some visiting kids to dress up like surgeons and scrub nurses, take a scalpel and go to work.

That's the cover story, anyway.

What's really happening is that kids are learning about science and enjoying it.

Whether there is a long-lasting payoff in future scientists won't be known for a long time. But science educator Lisa Silverman is doing her best with her underage surgical team and the wide-eyed young audience watching them.

"Can everybody say the word 'autoclave?'" Silverman asked the other day while holding up some surgical instruments. "That's a fancy word for an oven-dishwasher that goes at a very high temperature and actually kills the germs."

As she guided the children through the operation, she wove in lessons about infections, surgery, the roles of operating room staff and the kinds of schooling her young audience would need to get those jobs.

To education experts, this is "informal" or "free-choice" science learning, which means it's happening outside of school.

This summer the National Academies, a congressionally chartered nonprofit group that advises the federal government, will release a report on what's known about the learning of science in such informal settings. That includes not only museums but also such places as zoos and aquariums.

The report comes as experts bemoan a lack of scientific education and literacy among Americans. They warn of a shortfall in homegrown engineers and scientists to keep the nation competitive, a general work force ill-equipped to function in an increasingly high-tech workplace, and a citizenry struggling to grasp complex public issues like stem cell research.

While that has led to calls for changes in schools, science museums broadly defined to include a range of science-oriented places to visit can also play a big role in teaching and promoting science to both children and adults, expert say.

Studies are showing that such institutions stimulate interest, awareness, knowledge and understanding, said David Ucko, an expert on informal learning at the National Science Foundation, which requested this summer's study.

"They're very useful," said Gerry Wheeler, executive director of the National Science Teachers Association. "They're a valuable resource for making nature real to the young, hungry mind."

The Association of Science-Technology Centers, which represents such institutions, counts 353 members in the United States. Apart from welcoming visitors, such centers often offer programs to schools, field trips, teacher workshops and after-school programs.

At the Liberty Science Center, which expects about 850,000 guests this year, visitors can walk a high steel beam in the skyscraper exhibit or practice laboratory procedures. "With us, they're right up touching the science," says Jeff Osowski, the center's vice president of learning and teaching.

Seventy times a year, school groups and others gather in an auditorium to talk with surgeons as they perform operations on the other end of a live video link.

Bobbi Bremmer, who teaches high school science in Livingston, N.J., has taken her anatomy and physiology classes to these programs since 2003. The students have done many animal dissections and computer-generated virtual dissections. But it's still startling to see a power saw cut open a human rib cage, smoke rising from a cauterizing scalpel blade or urine coming from a newly transplanted kidney, she said.

"The students ask a lot of questions and get very frank answers from the doctors and the nurses," she said. "For many of the students this experience can be life-altering, especially those who are considering a career in medicine and science."

Discussion of why the patients needed surgery, with reasons including kidney disease or a bad diet or lack of exercise, is also eye-opening, Bremmer said. For many students, "that is as important as any technical or book lesson, because the information is applicable to their families, friends and most of all, themselves," she said.

Museums "have an enormous role to play" in teaching children because they can offer experiences that are tough for schools to present, says George Hein, a professor emeritus at Lesley University in Cambridge, Mass., and author of the book "Learning in the Museum."

"You can actually do science. You can take prisms and mirrors and see what happens when you move light around," he said. Like music or sports, science has to be experienced firsthand to truly be understood, Hein said.

People don't necessarily gain a new insight every time they visit a museum, but the same can be said about time in most schools, Hein said. Comparing the two settings on learning-per-minute, he said, "I think museums might be quite efficient."

Another advantage of museums is that visitors can choose what to focus on, and that helps them learn more and retain it longer, says Oregon State University researcher John Falk. He added that museums benefit from a self-fulfilling prophecy: People expect to learn about science there, and so they do.

Research shows visitors do learn. One study, for example, focused on the effect of an exhibit about the human skeleton. When a visitor pedaled a stationary bicycle, a pane of glass showed an image of a skeleton within the visitor's reflection.

After that experience, 6- and 7-year-olds were handed an outline of the body and asked to draw a skeleton. Nearly all drew bones terminating at the joints a sharp contrast to the performance of other kids who didn't go through the exhibit. Remarkably, even eight months later, nearly all the museum visitors in the study still knew the relationship between bones and joints.

Falk found about a decade ago that the percentage of Los Angeles residents who could define homeostasis as an organism's retaining of a stable internal environment rose to 12 percent from 5 percent after a local museum opened an exhibit that included that concept.

Almost everybody who responded correctly said they learned the definition in school, Falk said. But it evidently took a museum visit to bring that lesson back, which illustrates how museums can help people make better use of what they'd already learned, he said.

Or they can teach lessons with a delayed effect.

Falk said a woman told him about an exhibit she loved but didn't really understand when she was around age 5. To her, it was all about pushing a button to make a bunch of balls tumble through an array of pegs, ending up in a heap. Two decades later, when she was taking a statistics course, that childhood experience suddenly gave her an intuitive understanding of what the exhibit was really about: the statistical phenomenon of bell-shaped curves.

Still, much of the value of museums is about sparking interest and motivation toward science, rather than teaching specific facts, the science foundation's Ucko said. So kids may get hooked on dinosaurs or outer space at a museum, and then go study up on their own.

"People learn, but that's not the main point," says Martin Storksdieck of the Institute for Learning Innovation, which studies informal learning.

"The value of a science museum is that you expose yourself to science, that you pursue science and learn a little bit ... and you stay connected to science and you see value in science." And that helps society support the scientific enterprise, he said.

What's more, science museums entice families to learn together, and even about each other, he said. Parents may discover that a daughter is interested in engineering, he said.

And in a fast-changing world where people need to keep learning all their lives, science museums provide a model for going beyond classroom education, says Sue Allen, who studies museum learning at San Francisco's Exploratorium.

"We are one of the few places where people can get energized, get inspired, get excited ... and practice their own natural scientific inquiry skills. What a fantastic model for what lifelong learning could be."

Article 10

[Top](#)

The Associated Press In Pittsburg, Reform Plan Includes Community Schools 4.28.08

Richardo Grimsley, a sophomore at Pittsburgh Westinghouse High School in Homewood, said he sometimes thought about writing poetry, but didn't put pen to paper until a new after-school program debuted in October.

So far, he's written 20 poems, including "Fantasy," about his childhood dreams, and "Get Up," about his struggles with adversity. He's also refurbishing a bicycle through the program.

Called the Lighthouse Project, the program represents the Pittsburgh public schools' first efforts to create "community" or "full service" schools that go beyond education to focus on students' health and welfare. Many community schools serve adults, too.

They often stay open well into the evening, providing a range of social services to lift individuals, mend families, and revitalize neighborhoods. "Get Up" could be the schools' theme.

Taking Root

While the definition of a community school varies, the concept has taken root in cities nationwide, with officials recognizing that what happens outside school affects children's performance in the classroom. The schools rely on businesses and neighborhood groups for help.

Pittsburgh officials are incorporating the concept into Superintendent Mark Roosevelt's plans to turn around failing schools. The district may replicate the Lighthouse Project in other troubled neighborhoods.

"When I'm stressed or I'm mad, it helps me get through the day," Mr. Grimsley said of the program. "It calms me down."

With a contract of about \$300,000, the Homewood-Brushton YMCA launched the project with classes in poetry, dance, music production, and visual arts, all designed to broaden Westinghouse students' horizons.

While Mr. Grimsley worked on poetry, other students printed T-shirts with a Lighthouse Project logo, painted murals, and practiced "stepping," the dance style highlighted in the movie "Stomp the Yard."

The program also includes guest speakers and field trips. As they get to know students, organizers get to know the youths' needs. Project director Duane Berry said he's able to connect students with a food bank and other services that one day may be provided at the school.

Boost for Movement

The Lighthouse Project operates from 3 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Attendance fluctuates; about 30 students were present on a recent Wednesday.

Community schools are modeled after the 19th-century settlement houses that provided education, health care, and other services to immigrants in New York and Chicago. The philosopher John Dewey advanced the concept in a 1902 address titled "The School as Social Center," and the **Charles Stewart Mott Foundation funded some of the nation's earliest community schools in Flint, Mich., during the 1930s.**

Interest has waxed and waned, with the Coalition for Community Schools, in Washington, trying to build numbers and secure federal funding for the schools. The movement got a boost April 1, when the America's Promise Alliance, also in Washington, released a report on the urban dropout crisis and called for a marshaling of community resources to reverse the trend.

Ira Harkavy, the chairman of the community schools coalition and founding director of the University of Pennsylvania's Netter Center for Community Partnerships, said the schools are hubs of a neighborhood ecosystem. Community schools rely on

businesses and community groups to provide education, health, and employment services for students and their families. In return, students do volunteer work or apply their talents to community problems, lifting the neighborhood.

University Role

Universities often play an important role in the initiatives. The University of Pennsylvania sends faculty members, staff members, and students into Sayre High School in Philadelphia to teach neuroscience and other subjects. The Penn Health System provides Sayre students with internships in various fields.

The partnership includes a Sayre Health Center for students and adults. Penn students offer tutoring and run neighborhood basketball teams.

While businesses and nonprofit groups often help inside and outside the classroom, community schools offer a formal way of providing services.

“We have found a great openness and interest in supporting educational alternatives in the community. It has been more an issue of managing that interest and setting up an incremental approach to tapping the partnerships, as opposed to having difficulty identifying where they might be,” said Stephen C. Wilhite, Widener University’s associate provost for graduate studies and the dean of the school of human-service professions.

Widener last school year launched a community school-style charter school in Chester, Pa., where its main campus is located, because political instability in the Chester-Upland school district had frustrated the university’s efforts to assist district schools.

The school has 150 students in grades K-2. Widener and its community partners offer a variety of services to students and parents, from arts education to nutrition education to flu shots.

Community schools are one of the least-developed aspects of the Pittsburgh district’s improvement plans. The school system has a comprehensive plan to improve the skills of its principals as a way to boost student performance.

But Lighthouse Project staffers are forging ahead with next school year’s plans to open a parent center at the school and extend services to 8th graders in Westinghouse’s feeder pattern. “There is definitely a focus in this building I haven’t seen before,” said Michael Jackson, 18, a senior at Pittsburgh High School for the Creative and Performing Arts, Downtown.

Westinghouse is his neighborhood school, and the aspiring opera singer helped with the stepping class.

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4.28.08

MANY state lawmakers know that the proposed House budget doesn't satisfy the need for longer school days. Tough times require limits on new spending, but not in the one area of education reform that is getting students, teachers, and parents to sit up and pay attention.

This week, state Representative Vincent Pedone of Worcester and more than 60 co-signers will be fighting for an amendment to the \$28 billion House budget that would double - to \$26 million - the funds available to support longer school days. House Speaker Salvatore DiMasi says that it pains him that he couldn't set aside more than \$15.5 million for the coming school year. But the upcoming budget debate gives him a chance to feel better.

In fall 2006, a \$6.5 million pilot program allowed 10 elementary and middle schools in Fall River, Boston, Malden, and elsewhere to lengthen the school day by about 90 minutes. It was an opportunity both to provide more time on core subjects and offer the art and enrichment programs that are often lost to the demands of the standard six-hour school day. Students benefited almost immediately. So did teachers who had a chance not only to earn more but to connect unhurriedly with their classes.

Last year, Governor Patrick and the Legislature agreed to double the funding to \$13 million, enough to support 18 schools. Patrick wanted to double capacity again. But the House balked, providing only enough money to add a few more schools from a list of 16 already approved by the state Department of Education. That sends exactly the wrong message to the dozens of additional schools that are in various stages of planning for a longer school day.

Alert urban educators recognize that expanding learning time allows them to close the achievement gap between minority and white students.

A study by Massachusetts 2020, a nonprofit organization that promotes the longer school day, showed big improvements in the MCAS scores of students in schools with longer hours.

In Washington, Senator Edward Kennedy is using Massachusetts as a model to build the longer school day into the reauthorization of the federal No Child Left Behind law. Teachers unions are also embracing the change. And even state lawmakers who rarely focus on classroom performance see the public safety value of keeping middle school kids off the streets during the trouble-prone late-afternoon hours, and the political value in helping constituents save some money on extracurricular or child-care expenses.

DiMasi and House leaders should take a longer look at the extended school day.

[Article 12](#)

[Top](#)

GateHouse News Service
Editorial: More time for learning
4.29.08

There are many paths to better education, and all come with a price tag. The most exciting school reform initiative in Massachusetts today starts with something simple: more time to learn.

We've long wondered by what logic school systems say they are providing all the education students need while insisting they walk out the school door at 2 p.m. But there's always resistance to change, and in this case it comes down to funding worries and kneejerk opposition to making kids do "more of the same."

The state's Extended Learning Time pilot program has shown what schools can do with an extra six hours a week. Yes, there's more time for instruction in the subjects students need most, including more time for individual attention and supervised homework. But ELT also lets schools bring back art, music, physical education and other activities that have been squeezed out by some schools' obsession with MCAS preparation. Enrichment activities, previously limited to children participating in after-school programs, have been incorporated into the longer school day.

Ten schools began operating on an extended day in 2006 through a \$6.5 million program that provided \$1,300 per student to the participating schools. Last year, the program grew to 18 schools and a \$13 million budget.

The reviews of the program have been nearly all positive. The longer day is popular with teachers, parents, and even students. Test scores for participating schools are up. ELT appears to help close the achievement gap between white and minority students, in part by providing enrichment activities that many minority families cannot afford to purchase after school.

Gov. Deval Patrick's budget called for doubling this investment to \$26 million. Sixteen schools - including two in Framingham - have been planning for more than a year how they would best make use of the extra learning time.

Unfortunately, the budget proposed by the House Ways & Means Committee level-funds the program at \$13 million. The House is debating that budget this week - mostly in private, which is no way a public body should make its most important decisions.

The Extended Learning Time initiative is making a difference in Massachusetts now and is being looked toward as a national model. The House must provide the full \$26 million Patrick asked for, and the Senate should follow suit.

[Article 13](#)

[Top](#)

Education Week Project Aims to Tackle Dropout Problem, California-Style 4.29.08

Improving California's education data system is often recommended as one of the first steps toward tackling the many troubles facing schools in the nation's largest state. And right up near the top of that list of problems is the high school dropout rate.

The fact that no one really knows with any certainty how many students quit school before they graduate was one of the reasons for the creation of the California

Dropout Research Project.

Headed by Russell W. Rumberger, an education professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, the project aims to offer a California-specific focus on a national problem and identify remedies suited to the state's schools.

"Some of the solutions will have to focus on English-learners, because that's who's dropping out," said Mr. Rumberger, who directs UC-Santa Barbara's Linguistic Minority Research Institute, which studies issues and provides professional development related to English-language learners.

The project involves a closer relationship between research and policy than is typical in most states. Since the initiative started more than a year ago, a policy committee has explored ways the state can respond quickly to the findings identified in the research.

Seen as Model

In one measure of its potential relevance for other states tackling the dropout problem, the project will be featured at community-based forums in all 50 states that Civic Enterprises, a Washington-based public-policy firm, is organizing over the next three years with the help of the National Governors Association.

"To me, it is the model of what could be created in other states around the country," said John Bridgeland, the president and chief executive officer of Civic Enterprises. The organization is one of several groups drawing attention to the "silent epidemic" of dropping out of school.

Mr. Rumberger said a "confluence of things" sets the California Dropout Research Project apart, including the desire of the foundations financing the research to influence policy, as well as a strong interest in the issue from state Sen. Darrell Steinberg. A Democrat from Sacramento who served on the policy committee, Mr. Steinberg also chaired the legislature's Select Committee on High School Graduation, which has already introduced bills inspired by the project's recommendations.

Having help "to get on the agenda is a huge plus," Mr. Rumberger said. "It gives you a platform for your work."

Mr. Rumberger also said he was "itching to do something different" from just writing scholarly articles and waiting for them to be published in academic journals.

Lost Along the Way

A study says California's official graduation rate fails to count students in grades 9, 10, and 11 who neither drop out nor advance to the next grade (shown here as unknown), and 12th graders who neither drop out nor graduate (nongraduates).

SOURCE: California Dropout Research Project Economic Impact

To date, the research project's work has produced a policy report, with recommendations for schools, districts, and the state, and a series of easy-to-read policy briefs that have been distributed to both legislators and schools superintendents across the state. The work is also being released a little at a time instead of as one hard-to-digest document, a strategy that Mr. Rumberger said "keeps the issue in the public light."

One of the policy briefs focuses on the opinions and attitudes of California high school students and their desire for high school courses to be more engaging and connected to the types of careers they might pursue.

“Students were eager to see the relevance of what they were learning,” the brief says, “and wanted materials presented in a way that was meaningful to them.”

Even though California’s graduation rate can’t be accurately calculated without a longitudinal student-data system, it’s somewhere around 75 percent. Among African-American students, though, the estimated graduation rate is 57 percent; among Hispanic students, it’s about 60 percent. That compares with 84 percent for Asian students and 77 percent for white students. Among English-learners, the graduation rate is about 70 percent.

According to a study written by economists Clive R. Belfield, of Queens College, City University of New York, and Henry M. Levin, of Teachers College, Columbia University, the state loses \$46.4 billion for each cohort of California residents that reaches age 20 without a diploma, after the lifetime costs of their lower earnings, higher medical costs, and increased likelihood of needing public assistance or committing crimes are taken into account. Each year, that number is about 120,000 young people.

“California would realize a sizable economic gain by investing in educational interventions that are both effective at raising the high school graduation rate and in generating benefits exceeding their costs,” the economists write.

Echoing a finding in “Getting Down to Facts,” a massive research project on California’s education system released last year, Mr. Rumberger’s project also points to the lack of information about whether the state’s structure of “categorical” grant programs is actually resulting in measurable improvements in schools with high dropout rates. (“California’s Schooling Is ‘Broken,’” March 19, 2007.)

“The state has various programs targeted to youth at risk, but the effectiveness of these programs is unknown because they are rarely, if ever, evaluated,” the dropout project’s policy report says.

New Standards Urged

In its recommendations for school districts, the report stresses that focusing just on keeping struggling students in school might not be enough for schools with large numbers of dropouts. Instead, it advises, “schoolwide reform strategies” should be adopted at both the middle and high school levels.

The report emphasizes that districts and schools probably don’t have the “capacity” to improve graduation rates on their own. And while it recognizes the contribution of outside experts, Mr. Rumberger described the use of consultants as a “necessary, but not sufficient,” approach to addressing the problem.

The state, the policy report says, should adopt high-school-reform standards, just as it has adopted academic-content standards, in order to give school personnel specific targets for improving graduation rates.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican, signed legislation in October that will require schools to report 8th and 9th grade dropout rates as part of the state

accountability system.

Eighth grade was included because of the evidence that many students begin the process of dropping out even before high school, and to give “middle schools a responsibility that they might not be so focused on right now,” said Susanna Cooper, a consultant to Sen. Steinberg. The law takes effect in 2011.

Legislative Response

In part because of the collaboration between the researchers and state policymakers, other bills have materialized as a result of the California Dropout Research Project. So far this year, two bills inspired by the research have been approved by the education committee of the state Senate.

One would increase schools’ target graduation rate for purposes of accountability reporting under the the federal No Child Left Behind Act from 83.5 percent to 90 percent. It would also require schools—as part of making adequate yearly progress under the NCLB law—to reduce by at least 10 percent the difference between their current graduation rates and the state goal every two years.

The other bill would give schools partial credit for helping students meet all the requirements for graduation in five or six years. Currently, schools only receive credit in the state accountability system—the Academic Performance Index—for students who finish in four years.

But some students need additional help to pass the state’s high school exit exam, and others lack enough credits, and therefore need more time to finish their studies, Mr. Rumberger and Ms. Cooper said.

Mr. Rumberger also believes the state should consider incorporating some nonacademic skills that are important for success in college and work, such as punctuality and community involvement, into its requirements for graduation.

He noted state schools Superintendent Jack O’Connell’s announcement earlier this year that California would join the American Diploma Project, a network of states organized by the Washington-based organization Achieve that is working to match K-12 standards with the demands of college and work. But so far, the network has focused only on academic skills.

Jay Smink, the executive director of the National Dropout Prevention Center, located at Clemson University in South Carolina, said that because the California project is well funded, at \$850,000 for roughly a year, it has covered an unusually large amount of ground.

“The project not only provides great information for the policymakers in California, it adds significant value to other researchers and practitioners elsewhere,” he said. “I am not aware of this kind of intense research in other states.”

Because Mr. Rumberger’s work has also raised new research questions, he’s now asking the philanthropies that paid for the studies—the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Walter S. Johnson Foundation—to extend the project, possibly for another year. (The Gates and Hewlett foundations also help pay for work by Education Week.)

“I’ve kind of come to realize that the work doesn’t stop once the work is done and the policy recommendations are made,” Mr. Rumberger said. “There’s always a role for research to play.”

Coverage of education research is supported in part by a grant from the Spencer Foundation.

Education Week
The Ultimate Reality Show
4.29.08

Ellen V. Futter

Kids love science. I know this because I walk the halls of the American Museum of Natural History every day, and I see young people who are excited to learn about the world around them. I’ve watched primary school children gape at the big blue whale, catch their first glimpse of a T. rex, compare themselves to skeletons of our ancestors, marvel at the cosmos—and wonder at their place in it.

But something happens to these budding scientists along the way, and most of them turn away from science by their middle school or early high school years. When today’s young people were asked in a recent survey to name a role model, half chose either an entertainer or an athlete. Parents, as role models, came in third. In fact, it turns out that fully 44 percent of the American young people surveyed could not name a single scientist they might consider a role model.

This is a contemporary crisis that has long-term implications, because both our nation and our planet are confronting challenges that can only be solved by trained scientists working with the broad support of a science-literate public. The problems of global warming, environmental degradation, species extinction, pandemic diseases, sustainable energy, and the rebuilding of the American infrastructure will all require a new generation of scientists and engineers. And the Internet-based global economy will increasingly reward entrepreneurs who are scientifically and technologically knowledgeable.

Yet even in the face of these challenges, our nation is lagging further and further behind. U.S. students typically score below the midpoint on comparative international measures of science achievement in grades K-12, and only 15 percent of U.S. college students end up majoring in either the natural sciences or engineering. By comparison, fully 50 percent of China’s university students graduate with degrees in engineering and the sciences.

We must do better, and we can. For starters, we need to rally the key stakeholders on this issue and coordinate their efforts. Here are several suggestions:

Government, at all levels, must make science education an urgent priority, and commit the financial resources needed for a sustained and coordinated effort to boost science literacy and science education.

K-12 teachers should be empowered to adopt hands-on, inquiry-based teaching methods that present science as a thrilling detective story, rather than a collection of facts and formulas. Study after study has shown that inspirational teachers can

ignite a passion for learning. Science teachers can channel that passion, and show their students that science can provide them with the capacity to make a real difference—to be tomorrow’s cancer researchers, climate scientists, and alternative-energy experts.

Colleges and universities should advise prospective students that they will favor applicants who have done well in high school science courses, and that scholarship money will be available for students who pursue science at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Corporate America should provide leadership and a serious financial commitment to science education in order to train the workforce of tomorrow. America’s continued leadership in the global economy will depend upon it.

And there is an important role for the so-called “informal” education sector: science museums, natural history museums, zoos, botanical gardens, and planetariums. These institutions bring science to life by providing exciting opportunities to see, hear, smell, touch, and feel science, in one-of-a-kind environments beyond the classroom walls.

It is our responsibility to help light the spark that will turn scientific discovery into an exciting adventure for our children.

But politicians, schools, business leaders, and museums can’t do it all. We, as parents, need to realize that the commitment to science education must begin in our own homes, around our own dinner tables. It is our responsibility to help light the spark that will turn scientific discovery into an exciting adventure for our children. They may not all grow up to be astronauts or physicists, but they can at least grow up to be science lovers and science literates.

The reality is that a major push for science education won’t happen unless voters, and specifically parents, demand it. This is an election year, and the voices of millions of parents, concerned for their children’s future, need to be heard. In the 1990s, politicians discovered the “soccer mom.” This year, they need to hear from the science mom ... and the science dad. Because the hard truth is that, if we fail to engage our kids in science, we will condemn them to second-class citizenship in an increasingly science-dependent and science-knowledgeable world. The jobs in the new economy will be closed to them. And the great problems of the 21st century, if they are solved at all, will be solved by others.

In a sense, science is now the ultimate reality show. As a society, we’re deciding every day whether we will thrive, or even survive. Given these challenges, it’s clear that we need to view science as a life issue, and not just another hour in the K-12 school day.

Today’s world is filled with seemingly intractable problems. Science education isn’t one of them. This is a problem we can solve, if we have the will and the determination. And it’s one we must solve, for the sake of our children and their future.

As the kids would say, it isn’t rocket science. Except, of course, when it is.

Ellen V. Futter is the president of the American Museum of Natural History, in New York City. The museum hosted a summit on U.S. science education this month.

Herald News (MA)
Officials taking a long look at extended school days
4.29.08

Will Richmond

The path is marked and goals are in reach, but for all students in the city's public school system to participate in the Expanded Learning Time program, it's going to take money.

As state legislators debate budget amendments over the coming weeks, one of the issues up for discussion is the amount of money that will go toward giving students an opportunity to spend more time in school.

There are 18 schools already in the ELT program, including three in Fall River, and another 32 are seeking to join the club for the 2008-09 school year. But standing in the way may be a lack of funding during a tight budget year.

Gov. Deval Patrick has doubled the ELT allocation to \$26 million in his budget proposal to expand the program. The House, however, has only increased the budget by \$2.5 million, though an amendment has been filed to bring the level even with Patrick's amount.

State Rep. Patricia Haddad, D-Somerset, the chairwoman of the Joint Legislative Committee on Education, said Tuesday that despite the merits of the ELT program, a \$26 million budget is "not realistic."

Rather than pinning a dollar amount on how much budget deliberations could add to the program's coffers, Haddad said the focus now is an attempt to add eight to 10 schools to the list.

Haddad said if the 32 schools seeking entrance into the program has to be whittled down, she would prefer to see communities where the program exists given preference. One reason, she explained, is that communities that have already succeeded with the program will need less time to plan and implement the longer days, in turn resulting in cost savings.

"If we could take a community and saturate it (with ELT schools) we'd get some really great data," Haddad said. "It also just makes sense to grow it in those communities because it will save us some money."

Advocates of the grant program say it's an investment worth making, regardless of the cost, and point to the three participating Fall River schools as an example of why ELT should be fully funded.

"We're really pleased, impressed and delighted with how Fall River has become a leader in how this program works," Chris Gabrieli, chairman of Massachusetts 2020,

the organization aiding the implementation of the ELT program, said during an editorial board meeting at The Herald News Tuesday morning.

Gabrieli cited statistics that show how ELT schools across the state have improved Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System exam scores and closed proficiency gaps. He said that among the most improved schools is Fall River's Osborn School. The percent of Osborn students at or above proficiency in math jumped to 62 percent in 2007 after averaging 25 percent during the previous five years.

English language arts proficiency climbed to 50 percent compared from 15.5 percent during the same period. An increase was also observed at the Matthew J. Kuss Middle School over the same period.

Scores for Fall River's third school, Silvia Elementary School, are not available because the school has only been involved in the program for one year.

While the test scores are the most obvious indication of the success adding 300 hours to the school year can have, Gabrieli and Superintendent Nicholas A. Fischer say the program has additional value.

As an example, they point out the connection students built with a Kuss math teacher who, because of the extra time, was able to offer a class in karate. So, instead of seeing the teacher as just some math dork, the students took on the view that their teacher was a cool guy who could smash boards over his head.

"It's amazing to me just how simple and obvious this is," Gabrieli said of the connections being formed.

The extra time also allows teachers to identify student needs better, learn about the skills of transient students and let educators address student questions.

"This gives us time to figure out where kids really are and to push them," Fischer said. "It gives teachers the opportunity to reach kids in a way we never had before."

The results, Fischer says about ELT locally and Gabrieli attests to statewide, are appreciated across the board by parents, students and teachers.

"It's working," Gabrieli boasts. "The teachers are happy, the parents are happy and the gains are there."

[Article 16](#)

[Top](#)

The Washington Post
Fenty Warns Against Plan to Transfer School Funds
4.30.08

Nikita Stewart

D.C. Mayor Adrian M. Fenty said art and after-school programs planned for this fall could be cut if council members transfer \$18 million out of the public schools budget and into the school modernization spending plan, as proposed by D.C. Council Chairman Vincent C. Gray yesterday.

The warning came hours after the council started marking up Fenty's \$5.7 billion

spending proposal for 2009. A vote on the budget is set for May 13.

Gray (D) said he recommended moving the \$18 million because the mayor's proposal would require the new Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization to use more than \$34 million legally bound for modernization for the separate task of maintenance.

Gray's staff members estimated that the mayor's plan to dip into modernization funds -- a pool of money that Fenty (D) proposed when he was a council member and mayoral candidate in 2006 -- could lead to a \$204 million deficit over six years and "is tantamount to 11 schools that would no longer be funded for modernization," a council report noted.

"We've made promises to parents. We've made promises to kids to create these first-class facilities," Gray said in an interview.

Fenty said in a statement that the cuts "will have a direct impact on our ability to bring art, literacy and after-school programs to every youth" attending D.C. public schools, he said. "My administration will be meeting with the Chairman and other Councilmembers to further discuss funding these programs that are critical to providing an excellent education to all of our students."

Council members did not learn that programs were at risk until after they had voted to accept Gray's recommendations. It was emblematic, some said, of the flaws in the process: too little information from the administration.

When the first markup ended, council member Muriel Bowser (D-Ward 4) said she was wary of supporting Gray's proposal because she did not know which programs would have to go.

"I'll be the first to say that families aren't going to send their kids to buildings where the ceilings are falling," she said. "But I'm not going to support anything that . . . takes away from the classroom. We have to do both simultaneously."

The chairman's plan to move the \$18 million appeared to be another sign of the power struggle between the legislative and executive branches. Fenty has made major decisions without the council's approval, sometimes when it was required by law.

The mayor and his administration immediately went on the offense.

Schools Chancellor Michelle A. Rhee said after a meeting with parents in Anacostia that the cuts would cost the school system but that she was sure the transfer would not stand. "I feel very confident that once we explain to the council," she said, the funds will be restored.

The transfer was among several amendments suggested by Gray, including stripping \$2 million from the budget of Deputy Mayor for Education Victor Reinoso and using it toward expanding pre-kindergarten, a priority for Gray. Gray and other council members questioned Reinoso's \$6.9 million budget proposal, noting that it was three times as much as last year's.

Gray said his staff members found that the public schools budget was increasing by about \$64 million in local funds, a 12.5 percent increase. They found that functions once included in the schools budget are proposed for other city departments.

Gray also said the council did not have enough information to properly study and amend the budget. "There's no question we need more information," he said. "We've said it repeatedly."

At one point during the budget review, Gray received a handwritten memo from JoAnne Ginsberg, Fenty's legislative director, saying the council would get more specific information by tomorrow.

Jim Graham (D-Ward 1) said the council needed more information sooner.

At another markup session yesterday, council member Marion Barry (D-Ward 8) tried to address advocates' outcry over a rental assistance program. Barry recommended that \$30 million of any surplus revenue generated in the coming fiscal year go to the Local Rent Supplement Program. The Committee on Housing and Urban Affairs, chaired by Barry, accepted the proposal.

Markups will continue today with the Health, Finance and Revenue, Public Works and the Environment, and Public Services and Consumer Affairs committees.

Staff writer Bill Turque contributed to this report.

[Article 17](#)

[Top](#)

Education Week

Cross-Agency Project Tracks Students' Date to Tackle Policy Issues

4.30.08

Lynn Olson

Many students receive services from other public and private agencies besides schools. But educators typically lack access to data about those experiences or how they shape young people's lives.

Enter the Youth Data Archive.

The project, run by the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities, at Stanford University, works with local communities to collect data from multiple child-serving agencies to inform policy and program decisions.

"Youth operate in what I call an institutional train wreck," said Milbrey L. McLaughlin, the center's founding director and an education professor at Stanford. "All the youth-serving institutions are fragmented and incoherent. They don't add up to a coherent system of support for young people."

The Youth Data Archive, or YDA, allows school districts, city and county agencies, and community-based groups to ask critical research and policy questions affecting young people in their communities. By collecting and analyzing data from different providers, the archive can help identify patterns regarding which youths receive services and how those services might be improved.

The research project, which began 2½ years ago, is now working with four communities in northern California: Alameda County, Santa Clara County, the city of San Francisco, and San Mateo County.

Within each community, the YDA works with agencies in the public-health, child-welfare, and juvenile-justice systems, for example, as well as public and private community-based groups and school districts to identify the types of data they collect and the questions they're interested in using the archive to explore.

Asking Critical Questions

The Youth Data Archive develops a data-use agreement with each participating agency and community organization that outlines the types of information to be shared, how the data will be stored, and all security measures. Each participant identifies representatives to work with the YDA to help shape the research agenda.

To protect confidentiality, all data are housed off site at the SPHERE Institute (short for Social Policy and Health Economics Research and Evaluation), a Burlingame, Calif.-based nonprofit group.

The YDA researchers work to match data for individual students from multiple providers, so officials can track the services young people receive over time. The data are not used to provide services for individual students. Rather, they're used to answer policy and program questions that the participating agencies have posed.

Before matching data across agencies, the YDA must receive the agencies' assent to employing those data to explore a particular research question.

Craig Baker, the executive director of the Gardner Center, said that as a neutral third party, it can facilitate conversations across agencies that might be hard for them to have on their own. It also can help educate communities about the questions they might ask, and the data they would need to answer them.

A similar effort, known as the Kids Integrated Data System, was launched in 1999 by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania. It merges data from seven city agencies and the Philadelphia school district. ("Project Eyes Diverse Data Sets for Insight On Children," Oct. 4, 2006.)

In comparison with that effort, said Mr. Baker, the Youth Data Archive has grown more organically, depending on the community. San Francisco, for example, already had a shared-use database involving three public agencies, while Santa Clara County had to start from scratch. The Stanford researchers also hope to include small and large community-based groups in the database, as well as larger government agencies.

Making a Difference

The YDA has done its most extensive work so far in Redwood City, a midsize city in the San Francisco Bay Area.

In the 1990s, city officials, area school districts, and county agencies formed Redwood City 2020 to support the success of local youths and their families. Growing out of those efforts, Redwood City developed school-based family-resource centers at four sites that serve as hubs for such services as mental-health counseling, parent education, and home-visiting programs.

"Basically, we wanted to know if our services were making a difference in the academic outcomes of the students we served," said Karin Kelley-Torregroza, who at the time was the director for school-community partnerships for the Redwood City

schools.

To address that question, the Youth Data Archive linked enrollment information for the family-resource centers with school records and social-services information from the County of San Mateo Human Services Agency. The study confirmed that the centers were targeting the children and families most in need of help.

Effect on Scores

Equally important, researchers found that students who received mental-health services through the resource centers in 2004-05 had scores on the state English test that improved by 5.4 points more than those of similar students in a control group at comparable schools in the district. In math, the researchers found a positive but not statistically significant relationship.

"It finally demonstrated what we thought was true," said Ms. Kelley-Torregroza, now the director for children, youth, and family services at the nonprofit group Portland Impact, in Portland, Ore. "It helped us to show the school district, county, and other funders the importance of continuing to sustain these successful services."

Another study examined the relationship between attending after-school programs at the local Boys and Girls Club and gains in English fluency for youngsters learning English.

Using the Youth Data Archive, researchers matched data from individual students in the 8,500-student Redwood City school district with attendance data from the club. They found that students who attended the club regularly demonstrated greater improvement on tests of English-language development and were more likely to attain fluency in English, compared with their counterparts who attended less often or not at all.

"We couldn't have done any of this by ourselves," said Peter Fortenbaugh, the director of the Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula.

The researchers are now doing additional quantitative and qualitative studies to examine what practices at the club might have helped students learn English, or whether students who were more likely to learn English quickly were also more likely to attend the center.

Despite the potential benefits, creating such archives is not without its challenges. Those include building trust among the parties involved; ensuring buy-in from the people within each agency who actually handle the data, in addition to their superiors; and working to improve the completeness, consistency, and comparability of the information.

"The analyses are really only as good and useful as the data that are contributed," said Kara Dukakis, the associate director of the Youth Data Archive. "Part of the value of doing some of these analyses is to show the folks who are collecting the data that the more they collect, the deeper they can go, the better the analyses are going to be, and the more they can tell from them."

The work to date has been supported by some \$720,000 in contributions from Stanford University and private foundations. But, eventually, the researchers hope to charge a nominal fee, in the range of \$5,000 to \$10,000, to participating agencies to sustain such work.

"I just think this is the missing piece in youth policy," said Ms. McLaughlin, the founding director of the Gardner Center. "You can't have a strong youth policy unless you have this kind of data."

After-School Edge

Among English-language learners in Redwood City, Calif., students who attended certain afterschool programs were more likely to increase their scores on a state English test and to achieve English fluency, after adjusting for other student characteristics.

SOURCE: Youth Data Archive

Coverage of education research is supported in part by a grant from the Spencer Foundation.

Vol. 27, Issue 34, Pages 8-9

Article 18

Top

**The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
Health Care Industry Tries to Attract Youth
4.30.08**

Anya Sostek

The Jewish Healthcare Foundation and the United Way of Allegheny County announced a new initiative yesterday aimed at exposing at-risk middle school students to careers in the health care industry.

The program, called the Pathways to Health Careers Fellowship, will be funded with \$200,000 from the foundation and \$150,000 from the United Way.

"The issue is, the kids don't see the relevance of school today -- they don't get what they're supposed to be getting from high school," said United Way President Robert Nelkin. "The idea is to get to the middle school kids before they get to the point where they say, 'This doesn't mean anything to me.' "

Youth development groups will compete to be part of the fellowship, and the funds will be used to train youth development leaders and develop after-school programs to help students identify career paths.

The program should be under way by the start of the school year in September and should serve hundreds of students, said Mr. Nelkin.

Dave Malone, who serves on the board of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, said that 150 businesses have signed up to get students involved via tours, education programs or internships.

"We want our kids to talk about their careers at a younger age," he said.

There is hot demand in the region for jobs such as radiology technologist, laboratory

technician and perfusionist -- jobs with decent starting salaries and clear career advancement paths -- but students often don't know that those jobs exist, said Karen Wolk Feinstein, chief executive officer of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation.

The partnership between business, youth development groups and the education sector is important because the schools might not know exactly where they are falling short.

"It's an important triangle," she said. "The schools are not going to get there alone."

[Article 19](#)

[Top](#)

The Herald News (MA)

Our View: Invest in education, 05-01-08

5.1.08

One sure way to improve education is to increase the amount of time spent educating. Extending the school day has shown remarkable results locally and statewide, with test scores rising almost across the board.

But Expanded Learning Time has so far been limited to just 18 Massachusetts schools — three in Fall River — as the necessary state funds are hard to come by in these trying economic times. While state budget crunchers struggle with the financial conditions and are understandably hesitant to add funds to any program, ELT is one area deserving of a budget increase, even if it means sacrificing elsewhere. After all, the state can make no better investment than in the education of its youth.

Gov. Deval Patrick seems to understand the importance of an expanded school day. He has proposed doubling the ELT budget to \$26 million for Fiscal 2009. With the cost of ELT at \$1,300 per student, that will only fund about half of the 30 Massachusetts schools expected to be newly approved by the Department of Education for an expanded day. Still, it will about double the number of schools participating in the program's third year, a significant increase.

However, the state House of Representatives increased the ELT budget by just \$2.5 million, which will fund only three or four new ELT schools. While any increase in funding for such a valuable program is welcome, the House should do more. With a \$10 billion education budget, \$10 million shouldn't be hard to find. The House should approve an amendment before it to restore ELT funding to the governor's \$26 million proposal.

There's really no arguing with the results. Adding 300 hours to the school year — about two hours a day — has improved students' scores on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System exam and closed proficiency gaps between some previously struggling schools and the state average.

Statewide, student proficiency at ELT schools has increased 44 percent in math, 19 percent in science and 39 percent in English Language Arts, which includes literacy and writing. Elementary schools, in particular, experienced impressive gains in proficiency. Fifth graders at ELT schools jumped from 39 percent proficiency in ELA in 2006 to 60 percent in 2007; 25 percent in math in 2006 to 41 percent in 2007.

Locally, the numbers are just as impressive, particularly at the Osborn School, where proficiency in math jumped to 62 percent in 2007 from the previous five-year average of 25 percent. ELA proficiency spiked to 50 percent from the previous 15.5

percent. Kuss Middle School experienced more modest increases, and numbers are not yet available for the Silvia Elementary School, which is in its first year of ELT.

The improvements go beyond the statistics, according to Fall River Superintendent Nicholas Fischer, helping both students and teachers do their jobs. The extended day allows students to apply what they learn in more active projects instead of just listening to lectures. It allows teachers to get to know students faster and tailor their teaching style to meet students' needs. "Kids don't learn the same way," Fischer said. "This is giving us time to figure out where kids are and how to push them. Teachers have time to reach kids in new ways."

Education impacts everything, from economic development to civic pride to human achievement. There is nothing more worthy of government investment. When a proven system to improve instruction emerges, the state must take advantage and move to expand it, even if it means sacrificing elsewhere.

- The Herald News

Article 20

[Top](#)

Associated Press

Music can be path to language and math

5.1.08

Nancy Zuckerbrod

WASHINGTON (AP) — The challenge was to come up with an idea that can transform public education, particularly in poor communities. The winner: an educator with a passion for making school fun.

Michael Bitz won a national competition with his idea for helping students learn academic subjects while creating their own record labels.

Now, he'll try to bring that idea to schools across the country as the first recipient of a fellowship awarded this week through the Mind Trust, an Indianapolis nonprofit. The group's stated goal is to encourage entrepreneurial solutions to problems in U.S. schools.

An adjunct assistant professor at Columbia University, the 36-year-old Bitz previously founded the Comic Book Project, a popular program in which kids work on reading and writing by creating comic books.

He already is testing his new idea in New York City after-school programs. The kids write songs, create digital tracks, design cover art and market their CDs.

Elementary schoolers have recorded tracks about civil rights heroes and favorite holidays, while middle schoolers have rapped about edgier subjects like weapons, crime, and love.

Through the fellowship, worth about \$250,000, Bitz hopes to put the program in place during the school day in Indianapolis schools.

That can be a challenge in many districts, where an intense focus is often placed on core academic subjects tested under the federal No Child Left Behind law. Such a focus can come at the expense of other school activities.

Bitz says his program might boost reading and math scores. For example, he said the children who work on the CDs build math skills by coming up with marketing and business plans.

"I don't think it's so explicit as to be like 'Oh by the way, you just learned something about the quadratic equation.' But it's built into the process of what the children are supposed to be doing," he said.

Madelyne Giron, 13, says she was surprised one day to realize that the fun she was having in the music program had a lot in common with the traditional work she was doing in her English class.

"We were writing the songs, and we did similes, metaphors and personification," she said.

The program also seems to have social benefits.

Madelyne's friend Katherine Saldana said making CDs got kids in the after-school program to get along. "In the beginning we used to have a lot of conflicts," she said. "Since the program began, we came more together."

Andre Joyles, who coordinates the program at a Queens high school, says it also can help with the tough task of building teen confidence.

He noted one sophomore was painfully shy at the start of the year but secretly loved writing poetry. Through the program, she began putting her words to music and sharing the effort with her peers. "She never really used to express herself," Joyles said. "She's open with us now."

A goal of the Mind Trust fellowship is to create programs that are inexpensive, so that they can easily be replicated. Bitz said his program costs about \$2,500 to put in place in a school, a relatively low cost for a high-tech initiative.

There were nearly 150 applicants in the Mind Trust competition, with ideas that included connecting school children with people who work behind the scenes in the sports industry and creating an after-school book club for girls with themes relevant to the girls' lives.

Like the winning idea, other applications focused on encouraging hands-on student engagement in school, said David Harris, the Mind Trust's president and chief executive officer.

Bitz, who played bass guitar and the upright bass as a kid, said bringing music-making to schools is a sure way to draw kids in.

"There's just something about music that helps kids connect to themselves and the world at large," he said. "I'm trying to capitalize on that in some way."

**Brooklyn Downtown STAR
Bloomberg Touts School Program
5.1.08**

Henrick A. Karoliszyn

When he stepped into the P.S. 36 cafeteria on Wednesday, Michael Bloomberg was not a stranger to his surroundings. The school, located on 187-01 Foch Boulevard in South Queens, was the first one he visited as mayor.

"It's hard to believe the improvements that have been made since then," the mayor said of the changes that took place from when Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott was a student. "Here they are getting a great education so that they will not only be deputy mayors, but mayors."

Bloomberg came to promote the Out-of-School Time (OST) initiative that began in 2005. The \$200 million deal provides a mix of academic, recreational, and cultural activities for young people after school, during holidays, and throughout the summer. It consists of over 550 free programs in neighborhoods across the city and is operated by over 200 community-based organizations.

The program serves elementary, middle, and high school students, and ultimately aims to help parents and students alike. "The Out-of-School Time system will better serve children and working parents by engaging youth at precisely times of the day when they are likely to be home alone or are most vulnerable," said Bloomberg. "For those young people, the learning and growing will continue even after the school bell has rung."

Systematic changes have been provided by the OST programs, which have been placed in traditionally underserved communities. Throughout the five boroughs, the program will grow to have an excess of 90,000 students by years' end according to Ryan Dodge, deputy chief of staff for the Mayor's office.

"Without it, parents may have less options of where to put their children after school and during breaks," he said. "It's more than just an after-school program."

Walcott, whose official title is deputy mayor of Education and Community Development, said OST can be a vital asset to communities. "I think it provides a stable opportunity for children to have recreational and educational activities taking place and having a neighborhood base," he said.

As a former student, he found the program would enhance the experience for younger kids attending P.S. 36 now.

"There are major benefits for the children of the area because it involves an alignment both from a pedagogical point of view but also in making sure there is based information that we have their backs," he said.

Already the initiative has gained noticeable support from the children in P.S. 36. After Mayor Bloomberg ate pizza with the students, he asked them if they liked the program and they unanimously shouted "yes." Families can find OST and other youth programs in their neighborhood including program hours, ages served and types of activities either online at www.nyc.gov/dycd or by dialing the City's 311 information line.