



Headlines

6.13.08-6.20.08

| Article | Date    | Headline  | Publication            | Author              |
|---------|---------|---|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1*      | 6.12.08 | <p><a href="#"><u>Productivity begins with after-school programs for kids</u></a></p> <p><b>Excerpt:</b> The City of Rochester and the City School District say they'll jointly fund city recreation programs that were threatened with shutting down this summer -- and they'll work together on a new model that integrates city rec programs with education.</p> | The Peninsula Gateway  | Shawn Fletcher      |
| 2*      | 6.12.08 | <p><a href="#"><u>Bush loyalist fights foes of 'No Child' Law</u></a></p> <p><b>Excerpt:</b> Margaret Spellings is not running for office — at least, not yet. But in the waning days of the Bush presidency, she is running one last campaign.</p>   | The New York Times     | Sheryl Gay Stolberg |
| 3       | 6.13.08 | <p><a href="#"><u>Duffy wants to restore funds for after-school programs in Rochester</u></a></p> <p><b>Excerpt:</b> Mayor Robert Duffy plans to restore funding to city-operated recreational programs that are housed at 11 city schools.</p>   | Democrat and Chronicle | Erica Bryant        |
| 4       | 6.13.08 | <p><a href="#"><u>Wood Hill, High Plain only Andover schools looking at longer day</u></a></p> <p><b>Excerpt:</b> Six of the town's schools set out last fall with an \$11,000 grant to study whether extending the school year by 300 hours was right</p>  | The Eagle Tribune      | Crystal Bozek       |

for them.

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|---|---------|---|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 5 | 6.13.08 | <a href="#"><u>Obama. Liberalism and the challenge of reform</u></a>  | The New York Times              | David Brooks             |
|   |         | <b>Excerpt:</b> Op-ed Columnist David Brooks explores Obama's education policies and whether his views fit into the traditional or reformist education camps.   |                                 |                          |
| 6 | 6.13.08 | <a href="#"><u>From testing to merit pay, McCain adviser lays out his educational thinking</u></a>  | The Washington Post — The Trail | Maria Glod               |
|   |         | <b>Excerpt:</b> Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) hasn't said much about how to fix America's schools. But an adviser yesterday said the presumptive Republican presidential nominee supports using federal dollars for teacher merit pay and wants to change the No Child Left Behind law championed by President Bush. |                                 |                          |
| 7 | 6.13.08 | <a href="#"><u>Playing to learn: Video games in the classroom; Some scientists say video games could revolutionize education</u></a>  | ABC News                        | Julia Hoppock            |
|   |         | <b>Excerpt:</b> Learning how neutrophils attack infection in the bloodstream isn't exactly the most gripping topic for your average high school student, but the Federation of American Scientists hopes to change all that — with video games.   |                                 |                          |
| 8 | 6.14.08 | <a href="#"><u>Two schools get \$1.3M for extended day</u></a>  | Worcester Telegram & Gazette    | Telegram & Gazette Staff |
|   |         | <b>Excerpt:</b> Mary E. Wells Middle School and West Street Elementary School were awarded competitive state grants totaling \$1.3 million to set up an expanded school day for the 2008-2009 year, officials said last night.  |                                 |                          |
| 9 | 6.15.08 | <a href="#"><u>Some D-11 students will have a longer school day</u></a>   | The Gazette                     | Shari Chaney Griffin     |
|   |         | <b>Excerpt:</b> WHAT HAPPENED: In the 2007-08 school year, students at five elementary schools in Colorado Springs School District 11 attended  |                                 |                          |

class 60 minutes longer each day than their counterparts at other schools.

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| 10 | 6.15.08 | <a href="#"><u>Schools with 4-day weeks sing praises: Jenkins, Webster systems say plan saved money</u></a>   | Appalachian News-Express | Carrie Moore                                 |
|    |         | <b>Excerpt:</b> J.C. Chaney may be the only Pike County School Board member who thinks the board should investigate a four-day school week, but officials in school districts that have already made the switch have nothing but praise for the changes to their systems. |                          |  |
| 11 | 6.16.08 | <a href="#"><u>'Two Million Minutes' suggests it's time to improve U.S. education</u></a>   | Los Angeles Times        | Mitchell Landsberg                           |
|    |         | <b>Excerpt:</b> It was over dinner in Bangalore that Bob Compton began to suspect something was deeply amiss in the way America educates its young.   |                          |  |
| 12 | 6.16.08 | <a href="#"><u>Ohio education grant to study alternatives to standardized testing; State will study alternative assessment</u></a>  | The Plain Dealer         | Scott Stephens                               |
|    |         | <b>Excerpt:</b> Put down that No. 2 pencil and grab a paint brush. Or design a research project. Or go to work in a homeless shelter.   |                          |  |
| 13 | 6.17.08 | <a href="#"><u>In search of the education president</u></a>   | The New York Times       | Helen F. Ladd, Pedro Noguera and Tom Payzant |
|    |         | <b>Excerpt:</b> To the Editor: David Brooks perpetuates stereotypes that plague our country's serious efforts to close the achievement gap among America's highest-need students.   |                          |  |
| 14 | 6.17.08 | <a href="#"><u>Ritter's education push modified — by degrees</u></a>  | The Denver Post          | John Ingold                                  |
|    |         | <b>Excerpt:</b> Gov. Bill Ritter told the members of his education advisory panel Monday to focus their efforts on lowering the dropout rate and increasing the number of students  |                          |  |

who receive degrees after high school.

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| 15 | 6.17.08 | <a href="#"><u>New kind of school passes first test</u></a>  | Providence Journal      | Cynthia Needham  |
|    |         | <p><b>Excerpt:</b> Experimental concepts like longer school days and 10-month academic years may be coming to Rhode Island with the advent of "mayoral academies" a new class of public schools free from union structures.</p>  |                         |                  |
| 16 | 6.17.08 | <a href="#"><u>School may mirror work day. Pleasant Valley Principal suggests changing hours.</u></a>  | The Morning Call        | Andrew C. Martel |
|    |         | <p><b>Excerpt:</b> A Pleasant Valley Schools principal wants to offer students a school day that matches their parents' work day.</p>  |                         |                  |
| 17 | 6.17.08 | <a href="#"><u>Not in my school yard</u></a>   | The Wall Street Journal | James Taranto    |
|    |         | <p><b>Excerpt:</b> On the same day that he was extolling the need to shake up the "status quo" in education, Obama also defended his opposition to school vouchers.</p>  |                         |                  |
| 18 | 6.18.08 | <a href="#"><u>Report sees cost in some academic gains</u></a>   | The New York Times      | Sam Dillon       |
|    |         | <p><b>Excerpt:</b> A new study argues that the nation's focus on helping students who are furthest behind may have produced a Robin Hood effect, yielding steady academic gains for low-achieving students in recent years at the expense of top students.</p>         |                         |                  |
| 19 | 6.18.08 | <a href="#"><u>Teacher interns 'highly qualified,' judge says</u></a>  | San Francisco Chronicle | Bob Egelko       |
|    |         | <p><b>Excerpt:</b> A federal judge upheld Bush administration education rules Tuesday that classify more than 10,000 teaching interns in California, and tens of thousands more nationwide, as "highly qualified teachers" and allow them to remain in classrooms.</p> |                         |                  |

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| 20 | 6.18.08 | <a href="#"><u>Focus on Education</u></a>  | The Denver Post        | Liane Morrison   |
|    |         | <b>Excerpt:</b> This view of K-12 funding in Colorado just doesn't match up with reality in our school districts. Over the past several years, increases in school funding have not kept up with the skyrocketing costs of health care and energy.   |                        |                  |
| 21 | 6.18.08 | <a href="#"><u>Governor plans education forums</u></a>   | The Advertiser Tribune | Jill Gosche      |
|    |         | <b>Excerpt:</b> Gov. Ted Strickland is pledging to host forums about the future of education, present his ideas to the state legislature and seek a ballot issue if legislators don't cooperate.   |                        |                  |
| 22 | 6.18.08 | <a href="#"><u>2 new coalitions seek influence on campaigns</u></a>  | Education Week         | David J. Hoff    |
|    |         | <b>Excerpt:</b> Two sets of distinguished educators and policy leaders released statements with differing answers last week to the question of whether schools should be held responsible for improving student achievement or should health and social programs step in to help ensure student's success. |                        |                  |
| 23 | 6.18.08 | <a href="#"><u>Providence, R.I., school projects found to overbill state by millions</u></a>   | Education Week         |                  |
|    |         | <b>Excerpt:</b> A new audit revealed the city of Providence has overbilled R.I. for school construction projects by \$12.7 million since the 90s.  |                        |                  |
| 24 | 6.18.08 | <a href="#"><u>Showing what they know: In Rhode Island, performance-based assessments are now required for high school graduation.</u></a>   | Education Week         | Scott J. Cech    |
|    |         | <b>Excerpt:</b> This year, Rhode Island requires that graduating seniors, in addition to class grades and scores on the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP), choose and pass two of three performance-based assessments.   |                        |                  |
| 25 | 6.18.08 | <a href="#"><u>Project aims to improve H.R. systems in big districts</u></a>   | Education Week         | Lesli A. Maxwell |

**Excerpt:** Two education experts have launched Strategic Management of Human Capital, an organization to transform how the nation's largest schools recruit and groom school leaders, which they argue is key to student achievement.

26      6.18.08      [HBO Film Examines School in NCLB Era](#)      Education Week

**Excerpt:** A new documentary on HBO attempts to answer if No Child Left Behind is the right tool for improving education, especially in schools struggling the most like this in high-poverty urban areas.

27      6.19.08      [Yellow buses put schools in the red](#)      The Wall Street Journal      Anne Marie Chaker

**Excerpt:** The pain at the pump is hitting those too young to drive. In Nebraska, Bellevue School District is budgeting \$600,000 to cover fuel costs for school buses next school year, compared with \$250,000 a year ago.

28      6.19.08      [Minnesota sends message on No Child Left Behind](#)      Alberta Lea Tribune      Ken Peterson

**Excerpt:** The Albert Lea school board feels that student achievement is very important, and we are accountable for the educational outcomes of students. One of our goals is to identify measurable achievement goals for every student. It is my feeling that the 2001 federal accountability requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act is not an appropriate way to measure real student achievement each year.

*\*While these articles did not appear during the week of 6.13.08 – 6.20.08, they have been included due to the relevant subject matter.*

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**The Peninsula Gateway  
Productivity begins with after-school programs for kids  
6.12.08**

Shawn Fletcher

It's time for a new political party that works toward increasing the size of our economic pie rather than debating how to split up the pie we have. Let's form a new party, the "Productivity Party."

Our country needs to invest more in long-term projects that will help ensure growth. That way, if we want to do more for health coverage, or defense, or whatever, we can do more without increasing taxes.

Granted, there are federal government efforts to increase productivity. Improving roads and mass transit, for example. But we can do more. After all, improving productivity, by definition, means you invest to have more later. So the real cost is less than zero when the investment is successful. Productivity in the rest of the world is increasing faster than ours. That results in devaluation of our currency and hinders our standard of living. We must improve our productivity if we want more for everyone.

There is no alternative.

How about this for a productivity investment: Productivity is the result of what we produce with manpower plus equipment, and we're neglecting our manpower ingredient.

A large number of the children in this country are at risk of failure. The numbers quoted by educators are at least 10 percent, much higher in many areas. For a \$1.5 billion, we could have after-school programs for nearly a million kids a year.

We should beg, borrow or steal this amount of money, and more from our federal budget for this "productivity" investment.

These kids often don't have a chance from birth, with parents who don't know how to guide their kids or are so busy working to keep food on the table and a roof over the heads of their family to spend much time helping their kids make good choices.

Many of these kids, unfortunately, are raising themselves as best they can, because a responsible adult isn't around for them.

Let's help these parents and these kids, and give the kids a place to be where they will have the right influences for a larger part of the day.

The younger we start, the better.

After-school programs have been largely studied, and programs have existed throughout the country where funds allow, and they've proven their success multiple times.

We have learned that we would need to be creative to maintain a certain cool factor, especially as the kids get older. Maybe we can partner with our schools and others in the community with creative extended learning programs, which present opportunities for kids to connect with adults in ways that might get them excited about certain careers.

This investment will take a while to pay off. But if we start soon, we'll see a payoff in lower transfer payments (assistance programs) and higher productivity. Ten years maybe?

But keep in mind, with Anwar, another productivity issue. Did we drill for oil 10 years ago partly because it would take 10 years to get the oil to market? If we did, it would be flowing today.

Let's be smart business people and increase the size of the pie.

## Article 2

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### **The New York Times** **Bush loyalist fights foes of 'No Child' Law** **6.12.08**

Sheryl Gay Stolberg

NEWPORT, Ky. — Margaret Spellings is not running for office — at least, not yet. But in the waning days of the Bush presidency, she is running one last campaign.

On a cold and soggy morning in March, Ms. Spellings, the relentlessly cheery and sometimes sassy United States secretary of education, turned up here, at a little brick elementary school across the Ohio River from Cincinnati. She had been on the road for months, promoting President Bush's beleaguered education initiative, No Child Left Behind, delivering one sales pitch after another.

"I'm pretty sure that the new president, whoever it is, will not show up and work on George Bush's domestic achievement on Day 1," she told a group of civic leaders and educators, promising to do "everything in my power" to improve the law before the White House changes hands.

For Ms. Spellings, a longtime and exceedingly loyal member of the Bush inner circle, it was a startling, if tacit, admission that the president's education legacy is in danger. No Child Left Behind — the signature domestic achievement, beyond tax cuts, of the entire Bush presidency — has changed the lives of millions of American students, parents, teachers and school administrators. Yet its future is in grave doubt.

Adopted by Congress on a wave of bipartisan unity that followed the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the law imposed unprecedented testing requirements and tough expectations on the nation's nearly 99,000 public schools. But despite rising test scores, there is no hard-and-fast evidence, most experts say, that it is actually improving student achievement.

Today, roughly 11 percent of schools do not meet the law's standards — a figure that is expected to climb sharply as more schools struggle to meet the demand that all students be proficient in reading and math by 2014. The bill is so deeply unpopular that Representative George Miller, the California Democrat who was its chief sponsor, often calls No Child Left Behind "the most negative brand in the country."

The White House had hoped Congress would revisit the bill this year, but on Capitol Hill, prospects for updating the legislation are virtually dead. On the presidential

campaign trail, the presumptive Democratic nominee, Senator Barack Obama of Illinois, vows to overhaul it. The presumptive Republican nominee, Senator John McCain of Arizona, supports the law, though Ms. Spellings knows his priorities are elsewhere.

"It's not his passion," she said. "It's George Bush's passion."

And so, the education secretary has hit the road. She has visited more than 20 states this year, testifying in capitals from Tallahassee to Topeka, trying to gin up support for the measure while announcing administrative changes intended to make it more palatable — an insurance policy, of sorts, to help it withstand an assault after Mr. Bush leaves office.

She carts her own roller bag, changing into blue jeans in airline frequent-flyer lounges, so as not to rumple her business suits. She has slogged through inclement weather, flight delays and bad airport food.

"This is my child, my baby," she said over dinner in Maysville, Ky., referring to the No Child law.

And with seven months left to go, she is not prepared to let it slip away.

### *A Triumph*

The story of how No Child Left Behind morphed from a bipartisan legislative triumph into a laugh line on the Democratic campaign trail is, in part, the larger story of the Bush domestic policy agenda, of a Texas governor who came to Washington vowing to be "the education president" and wound up consumed with fighting terrorism and two wars.

But it is also the story of "little old Margaret Spellings," as she sometimes calls herself, and her personal journey with Mr. Bush.

They met in the early 1990s — a mutual friend, the political strategist Karl Rove, introduced them — when Mr. Bush was toying with running for governor and she was still Margaret LaMontagne, the chief lobbyist for the Texas Association of School Boards. She helped run the campaign, became a top aide in Austin and, after a divorce, followed Mr. Bush to Washington, a single mother raising two daughters with a big new title: chief of domestic policy.

Today, Secretary Spellings (she married Robert Spellings, an Austin lawyer, in August 2001, and became education secretary in January 2005) is one of a handful of the so-called original Texans still working for Mr. Bush. At 50, she is viewed as a potential candidate for Texas governor and is also one of several determined women, among them Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who count Mr. Bush as a boss and a friend.

"She and Bush have a special relationship, a camaraderie," Mr. Spellings said of his wife, adding, "She trusts him, and she loves him."

Perhaps more than any other adviser, Ms. Spellings helped shape the Bush education philosophy: a strict emphasis on standards and accountability, intended to close the "achievement gap" between black and white, rich and poor. While other Republicans

talked of dismantling the federal Department of Education, Mr. Bush cast education as a civil rights issue, challenging “the soft bigotry of low expectations.”

These were the foundations of No Child Left Behind. The law’s cornerstone is its requirement that states set targets and issue detailed reports on student performance. Schools must improve the performance of subgroups, including minority, low-income and disabled students. Schools that repeatedly fail to report progress are deemed “in need of improvement,” the law’s term for failing. Students may transfer out of failing schools, and the schools risk being shut down.

On a wall in a hallway outside her office in Washington — a spacious affair with huge glass windows overlooking the Capitol and paintings on loan from the Smithsonian — Ms. Spellings keeps framed mementos of the passage of the bill: The Senate vote roster, 87 to 10; a congratulatory note from Representative John A. Boehner of Ohio, a key Republican sponsor; a schedule from Mr. Bush’s bill-signing tour, a bipartisan road show featuring Senator Edward M. Kennedy, the Massachusetts Democrat.

Ms. Spellings was still so new to Washington, so green, that she did not realize how extraordinary it all was — or how quickly the relationship between the Bush White House and Congress would sour.

“We were used to doing business like that in Texas,” she said. “We just thought that’s how it was done.”

### *The Criticism*

The backlash was swift.

States that did not use annual tests to assess progress scrambled to meet the law’s requirement for testing students in third through eighth grades every year. Even states that did rely on testing, like Kentucky, protested what officials saw as the heavy hand of the federal government.

Kentucky already had what its education commissioner, Jon Draud, calls a “high-stakes accountability program.” But meshing the two “was like putting a slightly round peg into a slightly square hole,” said Lisa Gross, a spokeswoman for Mr. Draud’s agency.

Kentucky assessed student achievement every two years; No Child demanded it every year. Kentucky tested seven subject areas; the federal law required just reading and math. Kentucky marked progress based on a school’s growth; under No Child Left Behind, a school either passed or failed.

So schools could pass by Kentucky’s standards, but fail by Washington’s. The state pushed back, to no avail. “We said, ‘What you’re proposing is very similar to what Kentucky is already doing, and we have found that it is a much stronger, more reliable system if you do two years’ worth of data as an average, and give schools a little more flexibility,’ ” Ms. Gross said. “They say, ‘Well, that’s not how we want to do it.’ ”

Back in Washington, the Education Department, under Secretary Rod Paige, struggled to issue the regulations states needed to put the law into effect, said Gene Hickok, a former deputy secretary. Mr. Hickok remembers “an ongoing sense of

tension” between Mr. Paige and Ms. Spellings, who from her perch at the White House pushed for faster action. Mr. Hickok said both he and Ms. Spellings urged a firm stand against states seeking exemptions — a rigid approach that critics say helped undermine support for the law.

To make matters worse, Mr. Hickok said, the department had no public relations strategy to counter the burgeoning opposition. (The strategy it ultimately adopted — secretly paying Armstrong Williams, a conservative commentator, to promote the bill — backfired badly. The Government Accountability Office concluded it violated federal law.)

On Capitol Hill, Mr. Boehner was up in arms.

“There was just silence coming out of the department, the regulations were slow in coming and there wasn’t as much discussion with the states as there should have been,” he said, calling the department’s efforts “a fiasco.”

As the law identified schools in trouble, Democrats like Mr. Kennedy began accusing Mr. Bush of reneging on a promise of more federal money to help struggling schools right themselves. “We had reform,” the senator said. “What we needed were resources.”

In 2003, the National Education Association, one of the nation’s two biggest teachers’ unions, surveyed its members, laying the groundwork for a major message campaign that would denounce No Child Left Behind as “a one-size-fits-all approach to learning.” The union’s president, Reg Weaver, said, “We needed to galvanize our members as well as the public around a law that was not doing what it was intended to do.”

By the time Mr. Bush replaced the much-criticized Mr. Paige with Ms. Spellings in 2005, thousands of schools were being declared failing, and states were in open rebellion. Utah threatened to opt out. Connecticut eventually sued.

“No Child Left Behind, as implemented, has not passed the common sense or the fairness test,” said Joe Nathan, director of the Center for School Change at the University of Minnesota. “It did not make sense to citizens or legislators to say that this school is going to have to be closed or reorganized because kids who may have been disabled are not achieving standards.”

It was against such opposition that Ms. Spellings arrived at the Fourth Street Elementary School, the little brick building in Newport, on that soggy March day.

The school is a showcase, a model of a thriving urban school. Roughly 85 percent of pupils at Fourth Street received free or reduced meals — a barometer of economic disadvantage that can indicate poor performance. But through aggressive efforts to hire math and reading specialists, Fourth Street is making the grade under No Child Left Behind.

On the day Ms. Spellings visited, a 28-year veteran math teacher named Lynn Roberts was teaching first-graders about money — not an easy task when students rarely see money at home.

"I want you to see if you can make 28 cents," Ms. Roberts announced brightly, as little hands began sifting through piles of coins.

A little boy named Tahj shot his arm up in the air. "Two nickels, two dimes and three pennies," Tahj declared, for a total of 33 cents. The teacher gently corrected him; Ms. Spellings left impressed.

"These are not people who are sitting around whining about No Child Left Behind," Ms. Spellings said. "These are people who are hard at work."

In fact, Ms. Roberts and other Fourth Street teachers have serious concerns about No Child Left Behind. "My concern is that there is such pressure on assessment," Ms. Roberts said in a later interview, "that oftentimes people are working hard to pass the test, and not to gain real understanding."

Ms. Spellings often says the bill requires just one test a year, and here in Kentucky, the same test is used for both state and federal assessments. But Doug Alpiger, the Fourth Street principal, said tests beget more tests, because school districts want proof their students are on track.

At Fourth Street Elementary, the signs are everywhere. Classroom doors are posted with pie charts and bar graphs showing test results, though not by name. Hallways are lined with hand-made posters exhorting students to "Try your best!" on standardized tests.

"Assessments are very important, and I said that to the secretary," Mr. Alpiger said. "It's important for us to use data to drive our instruction. But the emphasis appears to be so much on assessment that, I'm telling you, at times during the year, our kids are being formally assessed for a month straight."

### *Repair Efforts*

As she travels the country, Ms. Spellings talks up efforts to use her executive powers to address concerns like Mr. Alpiger's. For instance, she has begun a pilot program allowing certain states to measure progress using a "growth model," a technique similar to the one that Kentucky was forced to abandon.

As to whether the law has truly narrowed the achievement gap, the secretary promotes studies showing math and reading scores improving. "I like to say we are pleased, but not satisfied," Ms. Spellings said here in Newport.

But the Center on Education Policy, a research organization in Washington, concluded in a 2007 study that it is "very difficult, if not impossible" to draw a cause-and-effect relationship, in part because scores were going up before the bill was passed. The center's director, Jack Jennings, says Ms. Spellings' initiatives are too narrowly written to make real change, and faults her spending more time being "a political operative" than listening to teachers.

"All these complaints aren't silly," Mr. Jennings said. "There's substance to them."

On Capitol Hill, Mr. Miller complains that he proposed similar fixes, but was rebuffed by the White House. "They sabotaged the reauthorization," he said, "and now she's running around trying to salvage a legacy that can't be salvaged."

Yet others, like Gene Wilhoit, a former Kentucky education commissioner who now runs the Council of Chief State School Officers, praise Ms. Spellings for trying to repair relations with states.

"My question," Mr. Wilhoit says, "is: 'Is it too late?' "

For Ms. Spellings, it may not be; her travels have raised her profile, building a network of connections that could prove useful if she runs for public office. She says she views the churning around No Child Left Behind as "a badge of honor," the price Mr. Bush had to pay for making what she calls "powerful and profound" reform.

Both supporters and detractors of No Child Left Behind agree that when the history of the Bush administration is written, the president will have succeeded, at least, in changing the American conversation about education.

As Mr. Wilhoit said, accountability "is now anchored into the process."

Yet many say Mr. Bush's promise to be "the education president" has gone unfulfilled.

To Mr. Kennedy, Mr. Bush squandered an opportunity to have "a legacy as great as Medicare." Mr. Weaver, the union official, gives Mr. Bush a D. Jim Hunt, the former Democratic governor of North Carolina, who is close to Ms. Spellings and backs the law, blames the president for the erosion in support.

"He didn't stick with it," Mr. Hunt said. Ms. Spellings, upon hearing this, drew in a deep breath.

She was sitting in her Washington office, the one with the Smithsonian paintings, drinking coffee from a porcelain cup, a long way from Texas. She paused a moment and then, in her own loyal way, effectively conceded Mr. Hunt's point.

"Well, you know, obviously, absent 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, I think the whole domestic agenda would have been different," she said. "He ended up being a wartime president and as such has devoted — appropriately so — time and energy to those issues. But with respect to how education fares compared with other domestic priorities, I think we've done well."

## Article 3

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### Democrat and Chronicle

#### Duffy wants to restore funds for after-school programs in Rochester 6.13.08

Erica Bryant

Mayor Robert Duffy plans to restore funding to city-operated recreational programs that are housed at 11 city schools.

A new partnership between the city and the Rochester School District means that participants will soon be spending less time on "boondoggle and basketball" and more time with their books.

Duffy's original \$478 million budget proposal called for the elimination of after-school recreational programs that the city operates at schools during the school year and the summer. The cuts would have affected about 2,000 students.

At a Thursday news conference, Duffy said he will continue funding these programs until the city and the district work out a new partnership model and funding plan that will give these recreation and after-school programs a more academic focus.

District and city leaders will be working on plans for such a model this summer and will examine other cities' efforts.

On Thursday, Duffy cited the Providence After School Alliance as a model he admires. This private-public coalition provides a variety of educational, cultural, musical, physical and social after-school opportunities in Providence, R.I.

In the meantime, funding will be restored to after-school programs at schools 2, 6, 17, 28, 41, 42, 43, 46, 52 and East and Madison high schools. District spokesman Tom Petronio said that currently the main purpose of these programs is recreation.

Brizard called the hours between 3 and 6 p.m. "critical" for city students and stressed the importance of having academic intervention services available for students who attend public recreation programs.

His proposed Rochester School District budget includes more than \$13 million for after-school programming, including extended day and week programs for all high schools.

School Board President Malik Evans praised the plan, saying that aligning recreation and academics is necessary if Rochester students are to compete in the world economy.

"Our old model of open basketball and boondoggle without a connection to educational learning is not preparing our children for their future jobs," Duffy said in a statement. "We want the city's recreation and youth services to contribute positively to our graduation rates."

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### **The Eagle Tribune** **Wood Hill, High Plain only Andover schools looking at longer day** **6.13.08**

Crystal Bozek

Six of the town's schools set out last fall with an \$11,000 grant to study whether extending the school year by 300 hours was right for them.

A year later the list is down to two.

Wood Hill Middle School and High Plain Elementary School are the only schools still looking at submitting Extended Learning Time draft grant proposals to the state in July.

"It's just the first step for the Department of Education to take a look," Andover Grants Coordinator Lisa Glickstein said. "There are still many more steps."

A second draft — the actual grant application — is due in December, but would need both School Committee and teacher union approval. If approved, students at those schools could see a longer school day as soon as fall 2009.

Meanwhile, the Bancroft, South, and Sanborn elementary schools have all decided to take another year to study.

"Some schools feel like they need more time," Glickstein said. "The three elementary schools that have dropped back, I think they are all still learning from the data they collected."

Shawsheen Elementary School will drop out of the process, saying that pursuing ELT money would mean losing the revenue from tuition preschool and full-day kindergarten students pay.

"We've had a lot of interest generated by parents and by teachers," Superintendent Claudia Bach said. "Why Andover? What's this all about? What does it mean? There's been some negative and positive."

If Andover were to keep a 180-day school year, ELT would add an extra hour and 40 minutes to each school day, according to school officials.

Glickstein said the idea of an extended learning day would compliment Wood Hill's expeditionary learning program, where students break from traditional learning to study a particular subject in-depth in all of their classes.

The extended learning day issue has left much of the Andover community split on whether a longer school day or year is needed. Some see it as a way to bring Andover students on par with the rest of the world, while others say it takes away from home life and after-school activities.

To keep parents involved, each participating school had asked families to fill out online time surveys a month ago, asking them how they spend their mornings and afternoons.

"The communications piece has been overwhelming," Bach said.

School Committee member Richard Collins has said he thinks the entire district should draft a proposal, not individual schools.

"If we want to do this, we need to do this as a school system," he said at a recent meeting.

The Extended Learning Time initiative was started in 2005 by the Department of Education. The grant awards a school \$1,300 for each student for a year. Then the school has to reapply.

Methuen had looked at a similar plan for the Comprehensive and Timony grammar schools, but the School Committee there voted to shoot it down late last year, a move that elicited a round of applause from parents.

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**The New York Times**  
**Obama, liberalism and the challenge of reform**  
**6.13.08**

David Brooks

Is Barack Obama really a force for change, or is he just a traditional Democrat with a patina of postpartisan rhetoric?

That question is surprisingly hard to answer. When you listen to his best speeches, you see a person who really could herald a new political era. But when you look into his actual policies, you often find a list of orthodox liberal programs that no centrist or moderate conservative would have any reason to support.

To investigate this question, I looked more closely into Obama's education policies. Education is a good area to probe because Obama knows a lot about it, and because there are two education camps within the Democratic Party: a status quo camp and a reform camp. The two camps issued dueling strategy statements this week.

The status quo camp issued a statement organized by the Economic Policy Institute. This report argues that poverty and broad social factors drive high dropout rates and other bad outcomes. Schools alone can't combat that, so more money should go to health care programs, anti-poverty initiatives and after-school and pre-K programs. When it comes to improving schools, the essential message is that we need to spend more on what we're already doing: smaller class sizes, better instruction, better teacher training.

The reformist camp, by contrast, issued a statement through the Education Equality Project, signed by school chiefs like Joel Klein of New York, Michelle Rhee of Washington, Andres Alonso of Baltimore as well as Al Sharpton, Mayor Cory Booker of Newark and experts like Andrew Rotherham, the former Clinton official who now writes the Eduwonk blog.

The reformists also support after-school and pre-K initiatives. But they insist school reform alone can make a big difference, so they emphasize things the status quo camp doesn't: rigorous accountability and changing the fundamental structure of school systems.

Today's school systems aren't broken, the reformers argue. They were designed to meet the needs of teachers and adults first, and that's exactly what they are doing. It's time, though, to put the interests of students first.

The reformers want to change the structure of the system, not just spend more on the same old things. Tough decisions have to be made about who belongs in the classroom and who doesn't. Parents have to be given more control over education through public charter schools. Teacher contracts and state policies that keep ineffective teachers in the classroom need to be revised. Most importantly, accountability has to be rigorous and relentless. No Child Left Behind has its problems, but it has ushered in a data revolution, and hard data is the prerequisite for change.

The question of the week is: Which camp is Barack Obama in?

His advisers run the gamut, and the answer depends in part on what month it is. Back in October 2005, Obama gave a phenomenal education speech in which he seemed to ally with the reformers. Then, as the campaign heated up, he shifted over to pure union orthodoxy, ripping into accountability and testing in a speech in New Hampshire in a way that essentially gutted the reformist case. Then, on May 28 in Colorado, he delivered another major education speech in which he shifted back in a more ambiguous direction.

In that Colorado speech, he opened with a compelling indictment of America's school systems. Then he argued that the single most important factor in shaping student achievement is the quality of the teachers. This seemed to direct him in the reformist camp's direction, which has made them happy.

But when you look at the actual proposals Obama offers, he's doesn't really address the core issues. He's for the vast panoply of pre-K and after-school programs that most of us are for. But the crucial issues are: What do you do with teachers and administrators who are failing? How rigorously do you enforce accountability? Obama doesn't engage the thorny, substantive matters that separate the two camps.

He proposes dozens of programs to build on top of the current system, but it's not clear that he would challenge it. He's all carrot, no stick. He's politically astute — giving everybody the impression he's on their side — but substantively vague. Change just isn't that easy.

Obama endorses many good ideas and is more specific than the McCain campaign, which hasn't even reported for duty on education. But his education remarks give the impression of a candidate who wants to be for big change without actually incurring the political costs inherent in that enterprise.

In Washington, Mayor Adrian Fenty has taken big risks in supporting a tenacious reformer like Rhee. Would President Obama likewise take on a key Democratic interest group in order to promote real reform? We can hope. But so far, hope is all we can be sure of.

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### **The Washington Post — The Trail From testing to merit pay, McCain adviser lays out his educational thinking 6.13.08**

Maria Glod

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) hasn't said much about how to fix America's schools. But an adviser yesterday said the presumptive Republican presidential nominee supports using federal dollars for teacher merit pay and wants to change the No Child Left Behind law championed by President Bush.

Lisa Graham Keegan, former Arizona superintendent of public instruction and a McCain education policy adviser, said McCain wants annual testing to stay, and that schools would continue to be required to report those scores. But she said he wants educators to have more say in how to fix struggling schools.

"The federal government cannot position itself continually as the bully in this," Keegan told a group of reporters today at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a nonprofit involved in education reform. "No more will we say that's what 50 states are going to do, because he doesn't believe that's our best hope for improvement."

Under the law Bush signed in 2002, schools that don't meet test score goals for two consecutive years must allow students to transfer to higher-performing schools. Schools that fall short for three years must offer private tutoring to children from low-income families. More sanctions follow.

McCain envisions a system in which students have access to tutoring and choice long before their school is labeled as failing, Keegan said. States also could pitch innovative reforms.

As for the law's key goal of having all students proficient in reading and math by 2014, Keegan said it is not clear whether it would change. But, she added, "That date is something that everybody's nudging and winking about."

Bush promoted school reform often in his 2000 campaign, but McCain has not stressed the issue. Keegan said to stay tuned. "The dialogue about the nature of that plan is one that the senator wants to have himself, and he wants to have it when he thinks it will get best heard and he thinks that's around back-to-school time."

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### ABC News

#### **Playing to learn: Video games in the classroom; Some scientists say video games could revolutionize education** **6.13.08**

Julia Hoppock

Learning how neutrophils attack infection in the bloodstream isn't exactly the most gripping topic for your average high school student, but the Federation of American Scientists hopes to change all that — with video games.

Advocates are enthusiastic about the promise of video games in schools, but some educators are wary.

Last month, the FAS launched "Immune Attack," a 3-D interactive video game designed by immunologists, teachers and learning scientists that aims to teach students how the immune system works.

The goal of the game is for the player to save an ill patient by navigating a "nanobot" through the blood stream to retrain nonfunctional immune cells. Throughout the game, players learn about the key aspects of immunology and must apply their knowledge in order to advance levels.

FAS president Henry Kelly thinks video games have enormous potential as teaching tools simply because they make learning fun.

"The goal is to hook you," Kelly said. "You can reach people who think they hate the subject. The minute you get swept up in the thing, you sort of forget that you hate science."

The Future of Education?

"Immune Attack" is still in its final stage of development and is not on shelves yet, but can be downloaded for free at their website. The game has already been evaluated in 14 high schools across the country with nearly a thousand more educators registered to evaluate it in the next phase of development. The reaction among teachers who have used the game has been positive.

Woodbridge, Va., high school AP biology teacher Netia Elam says the video game brought the concepts of immunology to life for her students.

"[With text books] they might read something, drag vocabulary words onto paper, or use their math, but they're not really integrated into it," Elam said. "Because they are playing video games, they were really engrossed in what they were doing. They took on more of an interest and more of an initiative to pay attention."

Elam, who has never used video games in the classroom before or taught immunology, was pleased with the results.

Rick Kelsey, the director of technology at McKinley Technology High School in Washington, D.C., says the game has been effective in engaging young students in complex subject matter.

"When you see kids, 14-, 15-years-old, learning immunology, the same thing a medical student is learning, but they're grinning and smiling and they can repeat what they learned? It's the future of education," Kelsey said.

The 'Halo' and 'Grand Theft Auto' Effect

But not everyone is convinced that video games have a place in the school.

Some critics worry that relying too much on video games and other interactive simulations to teach will only hurt students in the long run. They argue that it will leave students ill-prepared for higher education where reading textbooks still make up the bulk of the work.

FAS stresses that "Immune Attack" is supplemental learning material to be used along side textbooks. But Henry Kelly says he understands why some teachers might be wary.

"The teachers are right to be skeptical," he said citing the reputation of video games as a lazy hobby. "There is concern that it's going to be distracting and a waste of time."

Eugene Provenzo, a professor in the University of Miami's School of Education, says that educators need to be careful how they use video games in the classroom.

"You have to take into account that any type of video or computer game is in fact a simulation," Provenzo, who deals with issues involving technology and children, said.

"Simulations aren't necessarily what the real world is like. It has terrific potential & but it is not neutral, and may not be accurate."

Provenzo is not against using video games in the classroom, but believes that teachers need to vet games beforehand and be sure students understand the nuances of using simulations.

"The issue is not whether you should use them or not, but that you should use them with an understanding that technology is not neutral, but comes with a point of view, a perspective," Provenzo said.

Some teachers are wary because there are a number of violent video games on shelves these days. Kelsey says because of this, video games get a bad wrap in school, but it's something he hopes will change.

"The minute you say video games, a large portion of people think of 'Halo' or 'Grand Theft Auto'," Kelsey said, referring to two popular and violent video games. "A lot of teachers haven't been convinced yet and of course they're skeptical a lot of time, there still needs to be a reform movement before traditional education understands what it's all about."

Kelly hopes the FAS can be at the forefront of this reform movement. The FAS has been working on the concept of using video games in the classroom for the past seven years and in addition to continuing to develop these games, hopes to convince the federal government to allocate resources to this field of research.

"We're trying to get the federal government to recognize that this is a big and important research area," Kelly said.

The FAS has been lobbying Congress to pass the Higher Education Authorization Bill, which includes a provision about allocating resources to digital initiatives in education, that could include video games. The bill has cleared the Senate but has yet to be passed by the House of Representatives. Kelly thinks that "Immune Attack" is just the beginning of an education revolution.

"We hope this is just the first step. The ideal situation is over the long run to really make it possible for anybody to learn any subject quickly, inexpensively, wherever they are," Kelly said.

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### **Worcester Telegram & Gazette** **Two schools get \$1.3M for extended day** **6.14.08**

Telegram & Gazette Staff

SOUTHBRIDGE— Mary E. Wells Middle School and West Street Elementary School were awarded competitive state grants totaling \$1.3 million to set up an expanded school day for the 2008-2009 year, officials said last night.

The School Department learned yesterday the state Department of Education approved its plan to lengthen instruction time at both schools by 25 percent, or 300

hours, officials said. The Extended Learning Time grant will provide both schools an additional \$1,300 per pupil to increase the school day for their entire student populations.

The middle school, which serves Grades 6 to 8, will get \$780,000, and the elementary school, for Grades 4 and 5, will get \$520,000, depending on enrollment, Wells Principal Jason V. DeFalco said.

“We’re thrilled we have this opportunity to offer our kids more and better courses, a more well-rounded education that is truly all standards based, and that is going to help them in their regular classes as well,” he said.

The additional time is intended to provide more instructional opportunities in core academic subjects to support student achievement; integrate enrichment opportunities into student learning; and provide educators with more opportunities to plan and participate in professional development.

Elementary schools currently instruct for 900 hours a year; the middle school 990 hours a year.

Two-thirds of the money will go to teachers’ salaries, with the rest for transportation, materials and supplies, and professional development, Mr. DeFalco said.

The School Department submitted the grant application in December and a month later was notified both schools were finalists.

Mr. DeFalco said it’s been “a huge grass-roots push to get funding from both the Senate and House,” and schools had staff and parents call to lobby local senators to increase the line item’s designation.

Gov. Deval L. Patrick originally set \$26 million in his budget for extended learning time. The initial amount the House set was \$13 million. Senators were lobbied by all 76 schools seeking the grant to increase it to \$17.5 million, which the House matched, said Mr. DeFalco, who added he believed six to eight other applicants were awarded funds.

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### The Gazette

#### Some D-11 students will have a longer school day

6.15.08

Shari Chaney Griffin

**WHAT HAPPENED:** In the 2007-08 school year, students at five elementary schools in Colorado Springs School District 11 attended class 60 minutes longer each day than their counterparts at other schools. District officials hoped to increase student achievement at the schools, all of which have high percentages of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches.

**WHAT'S NEW:** In the upcoming school year, students at Adams, Hunt, Rogers, Twain and Wilson elementary schools will spend 30 extra minutes at school, rather than 60. Parent and staff member surveys conducted by district and school officials throughout the school year were partly the reason for the change, said Christian

Cutter, executive director of student achievement and school accountability.

The surveys indicated parents and teachers thought the longer day was helping to improve student achievement, but many teachers thought planning for an extra 60 minutes took too much time.

Ensuring the extra time is used well is important, Cutter said. "It's not simply adding time, but it's what you do with that time," he said.

Hunt parents were the most supportive of the extra time, Cutter said, noting they pointed to better student behavior and improved academics. Wilson parents said the extra time helped students who were learning English to become proficient faster.

Employees at the five schools receive extra pay for the extra time. The proposed 2008-09 budget contains roughly \$550,000 to pay for the extended school day.

The budget must be approved by the end of the month.

WHAT'S NEXT: The district's research department would like to see the extended day continue for several years, so they can gather more information about whether the extra time is benefiting students academically.

Officials will use Colorado Student Assessment Program test scores, which will be released this summer, as one way to evaluate the program.

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### **Appalachian News-Express Schools with 4-day weeks sing praises; Jenkins, Webster systems say plan saved money 6.15.08**

Carrie Moore

PIKEVILLE - J.C. Chaney may be the only Pike County School Board member who thinks the board should investigate a four-day school week, but officials in school districts that have already made the switch have nothing but praise for the changes to their systems.

In a recent school board meeting, Chaney said the school should look into the benefits and drawbacks of the four-day week as a way to compensate for state education cuts.

"I'm not saying it's the right thing, but we're looking at getting by," he said, and added that investigating the alternative was the fiscally responsible thing to do.

None of the other board members voiced agreement with Chaney and Superintendent Roger Wagner said he opposed the measure.

"We may save money today, but we're dealing with these kids' future and we'll have to deal with the results later," Wagner said.

SCHOOL DAYS LONGER BY A LITTLE

Two Kentucky school districts that have gone to a four-day week, Jenkins Independent and Webster County, say that switch has brought about nothing but improvements to their systems.

"Not only (have) we saved money, but by reallocating students' instructional time, we have been able to utilize a lot of educational enterprises we couldn't do with a five-day week," said Webster Superintendent James Kemp.

Jenkins Independent Superintendent John Shook said it has been a "tremendous success" in his schools. He said his district decided to go to a four-day week three years ago, mainly for budget reasons, and they used Webster County as a model for their schedule.

Switching to four days instead of five requires less time added onto each day than one might think. In Jenkins, students attend school from 8 a.m. to 3:25 p.m., and in Webster, students attend from 7:50 a.m. to 3:25, school officials said.

#### INCREASED ATTENDANCE, FUNDS

Both Shook and Kemp said they have seen an increase in student and teacher attendance since implementing the schedule change.

And, because student attendance is attached to state funding, the school districts said they have seen an increase in funds through increasing the percentage of student attendance. Webster County has increased its student attendance by one percentage point, which translates to \$80,000 in additional funding, said Riley Ramsey, Webster County director of pupil personnel.

Kemp said the district has averaged a five to eight percent savings in its overall school budget in the five years it has had the four-day week. He said they put their savings into instructional programs for students. One such program is called the Trojan Academy, and is designed to improve students' proficiency. Students at Webster County take periodic tests, which the school uses to determine which students are falling behind their peers, and where. Those students who need extra help are taught one-on-one, or in small groups, by retired Webster County school teachers.

Kemp said the students love Trojan Academy.

"It's a way to address the personal attention that every student craves. A student may dislike English class, but he likes going to his teacher at Trojan Academy, and when he comes back to English class, he performing at the level of his peers," Riley said.

Additional savings, Kemp said, comes from a decrease in transportation costs and lowered insurance premiums which result from less driving.

#### SYSTEM MAY NOT WORK FOR ALL

Officials at Jenkins and Webster schools warn that the success may or may not translate to a large school system like Pike County.

"It's easier to do in a small district than in a large district," Shook said, because a larger district has many classified employees.

Jenkins, because there are only three schools in the system, is able to keep its classified workers employed all five days a week. This is important, Shook said, because the employees still collect the same benefits as they did before the system switched schedules.

Kemp said it might be harder for a larger system such as Pike to switch to the four-day week, but it is possible, as long as the system "has the right kind of buy-in, the right kind of preparatory work, and the ability to see through the fog and look at all the benefits."

However, without the right buy-in, preparation, vision, and full support of the community, parents, and school officials, a district should not try to change its schedule, Kemp said.

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### Los Angeles Times

#### 'Two Million Minutes' suggests it's time to improve U.S. education

6.16.08

Mitchell Landsberg

It was over dinner in Bangalore that Bob Compton began to suspect something was deeply amiss in the way America educates its young.

Compton, a successful venture capitalist, was meeting with some of the Indian software engineers he employed. He soon found himself engaged in "the most interesting conversations I've ever had."

He had expected math and science nerds. But they also knew more about history, geography and literature than most Americans he knew.

"I said to them, 'How'd you get this way?'" he recalled. "They said, 'Well, at school.'"

That conversation launched Compton, 52, of Memphis, Tenn., on a mission. As both an entrepreneur and the father of 14- and 16-year-old girls, he wanted to know what schools in other countries were doing that American schools weren't, and why the United States performed so miserably on international student comparisons.

The result was "Two Million Minutes," a one-hour documentary comparing the educational experiences of six students: two Americans, two Indians and two Chinese.

The movie, in (very) limited release, begins with the premise that the high school years span roughly 2 million minutes.

How is that time spent?

Compton discussed the film, partially funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Broad Foundation, over breakfast recently in Beverly Hills.

Although the documentary has not been picked up for TV or broad release, he was upbeat about the effect it was having, mostly through college screenings and DVD sales.

But something was bugging him. It was a discussion that had taken place after he screened his film at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

"I took a brutal beating," he said.

Compton, who has run or founded several technology and medical firms, has an MBA from Harvard and thought he was on home turf.

Academics resist

But one faculty member, Compton recalled, told him that "we have nothing to learn from Third World education." Another, renowned education theorist Howard Gardner, took him to task for comparing the U.S. with China.

"His point was: How can you have a great educational system when you don't have freedom of speech?" Compton said. Compton saw the remark as missing the point: America may not have anything to learn from China's one-party political system, but it might want to know why Chinese students do better in math and science.

Gardner, best known for his theory of "multiple intelligences" -- which holds that different people learn in different ways -- declined to be interviewed but sent an e-mail saying that the contrast among students in the three countries is "well worth pondering."

"On the other hand," he wrote, "the movie's view of what education is, and . . . what it should be, is limited and deserves a response. While excellence in science, engineering and technology are worthy goals, it is equally important to learn about history, citizenship and the arts."

"Two Million Minutes" focuses on high-achieving students from top schools in Bangalore, Shanghai and Carmel, Ind., a suburb of Indianapolis. All are impressive, but the American students come across as slackers by comparison.

As the film begins, we hear the voice of Neil Ahrendt, an affable, well-spoken young man and a National Merit Scholarship semifinalist, saying: "Occasionally, I do homework."

Then classmate Brittany Brechbuhl talks about the importance of balancing schoolwork and social life.

Such balance appears rare in Indian and Chinese schools.

Hu Xiaoyuan, one of the Shanghai students, wants to study biology in college but also excels at ballet and violin. Her schoolmate, Jin Ruizhang, is a math whiz who says he began pulling all-nighters in junior high.

One of the Indian students, Apoorva Uppala, is a vivacious girl whose goals are to have a stimulating career in engineering and a happy family life. In the film, she outlines a weekend day, which includes studying with a tutor:

"Yesterday -- that was Saturday -- I got up in the morning at 5:45, got dressed . . .

and then had two hours of tuitions; after that did a bit of math and physics and then went to breakfast with my friends; then after that straight to school, and . . . we had classes for three hours after that -- without a break."

The clear message is that the Indian and Chinese students work a lot harder. The movie doesn't spend much time on curriculum or "rigor and relevance," the kinds of issues that dominate U.S. education discussions.

The film quotes Vivek Wadhwa, a tech entrepreneur on sabbatical at Duke University, explaining why American students are slipping behind in math and science.

"The hunger isn't there; the desire isn't there," he says. Chinese and Indian kids "are a lot more motivated to get into these fields and succeed, because they're fighting starvation, they're fighting hunger."

How to compete with that? It isn't easy.

Ahrendt, now at Purdue University studying computer graphics, and Brechbuhl, now at Indiana University, recently met in Washington with the two Indian students and found that they had a lot in common, including pop-culture tastes, and comparable goals. Still, Ahrendt said, "I think they just have more incentive to work harder. . . . You know, we have that incentive here, but it's not the same driving force."

Hitting a nerve

That is beginning to worry corporate America.

Raytheon Co., for instance, recently launched a website, MathMovesU.com, aimed at exciting middle-school students about math.

"We're very concerned about the technical competency of our future workforce," said Taylor Lawrence, a Raytheon vice president. The company, like others with sensitive government contracts, is required to hire U.S. citizens for many of its high-tech jobs.

"There's a sense that if you look out 10, 15, 20 years, you don't have a very robust pipeline," he said.

Tony Wagner, a Harvard education professor, was among those who watched Compton's film at its Cambridge screening and one of the few whose reaction was positive. Wagner studies innovation in U.S. education and has written a book due out this summer called "The Global Achievement Gap."

Wagner said Compton hit a nerve at Harvard because he was confronting an implacable divide between the American business community and the education establishment.

He agrees with Compton's central thesis.

"We don't challenge kids in schools," he said. "We don't challenge them to think; we don't challenge them to create. We challenge them to get good enough grades to get into a good enough college."

Wagner believes the solution is an overhaul of American education to emphasize innovation and critical thinking, not simply working harder at math and science.

"I'm suggesting that Bob is right, but not that the answer is the Chinese or Indian model," he said. "In this country, it's a different challenge."

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### The Plain Dealer

#### Ohio education grant to study alternatives to standardized testing; State will study alternative assessment

6.16.08

Scott Stephens

Put down that No. 2 pencil and grab a paint brush. Or design a research project. Or go to work in a homeless shelter.

A growing number of people in Ohio are asking whether one-size-fits-all standardized tests - the cheapest and most efficient way to meet federal No Child Left Behind accountability requirements - are the best and fairest way to measure academic progress.

In April, Ohio education officials secured a \$1.3 million grant to explore alternative assessments, such as portfolios, senior projects, journals, small-group collaborations or teacher observation. The idea: Give students an assessment that requires them to accomplish complex or significant tasks rather than forcing them to choose from multiple-choice responses.

And earlier this month, a statewide student group, Ohio Youth Voices, asked Gov. Ted Strickland to consider alternatives to the Ohio Graduation Test. Currently, Ohio students have to pass the five-part exam by the end of their senior year to get a diploma.

"Schools once renowned for their unique learning programs are becoming nothing more than soulless factories that churn out those that can excel at standardized tests while discarding those who can't," the leaders of the group, Shaw High School senior Jonathan Lykes and Federal Hocking High School senior Mason Pesek, wrote to the governor.

"We'd really like to talk to the governor and work to come up with another system," Pesek said in an interview. "Essentially, the current system is really failing Ohio's students."

Strickland spokesman Keith Dailey said the governor's office was reviewing the letter.

"The governor is aware that concerns have been raised about the Ohio Graduation Test," Dailey said. "He is open to exploring other types of assessments to address those concerns as part of the education reform process."

The exploration will begin in September when teams of educators from districts across the state will gather in Columbus and be asked to choose from a smorgasbord of alternative assessments and field-test them during the coming school year. The

theory: Since students learn in different ways, shouldn't they also be tested in different ways?

"Our current tests are just one measure of learning, just like in medicine, a blood test is one measure," said State Superintendent Susan Tave Zelman.

"We see this as giving kids multiple ways to demonstrate their competence and still have academic rigor," she added. "I think we can do this in Ohio and lead the rest of the country."

While Ohio might be positioning itself as a trend-setter in alternative assessments, the concept is hardly new. In the early 1990s, Vermont required all eighth-graders to complete a portfolio assessment in both English and math. Kentucky overhauled its testing program in 1998 and used an assessment that combined essays, multiple-choice questions and a writing portfolio.

"It was a very hot topic," said Ron Dietel, assistant director of the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing at UCLA. "There was a general concern that standardized tests really didn't show what students know."

Cincinnati was among the most progressive districts in the country on alternative, or performance-based, assessment. Students demonstrated their grasp of history by taking on a character from the past. They learned about Reconstruction by reading the diaries of white teachers sent to the South. They wrote letters to local newspapers, or gave public speeches.

"I've seen it as energizing rather than depressing," said veteran teacher Diana Porter. "It's assessment that is still standards-based, but students get to shape it a little, too."

But alternative assessments had their problems. They could be difficult to score and costly to implement. Political pressure grew to find something more efficient, a pressure that eventually led to the standardized test-oriented No Child Left Behind law in 2002.

With reauthorization of the federal law stalled in Congress, some see an opportunity to incorporate alternative tests into the federal mandate. Rhode Island lawmakers, for instance, have integrated alternative assessments into their state's testing system.

But Dietel warns that the easy lure of simple test scores has not disappeared.

"I wouldn't necessarily expect states to jump back on the alternative-assessment bandwagon," he said. "Even though a lot of states and a lot of schools would like to do it, a lot of people like looking at those regular test scores to see how their schools are doing."

And when teachers and principals are judged solely by the test scores of their students, there will be little time for portfolios and letters to the editor, Porter said.

"It's harder now to get teachers to stick their toe in the water and give it a try," she said.

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**The New York Times**  
**Response to: In search of the education president**  
**6.17.08**

Helen F. Ladd, Pedro Noguera and Tom Payzant

Re: In Search of the Education President

To the Editor:

David Brooks perpetuates stereotypes that plague our country's serious efforts to close the achievement gap among America's highest-need students.

We strongly disagree with Mr. Brooks's characterization of our effort. The statement he refers to, "A Broader, Bolder Approach to Education," is gaining hundreds of signers daily, representing a broad coalition of people with diverse views who agree that the "schools only" reform strategy embodied in the No Child Left Behind Act has historically failed and will inevitably continue to fail.

Our approach does not represent the "status quo," as Mr. Brooks proclaims. The approach endorses "school improvement plus" and focuses on the three "plus" areas of early childhood, health, and after-school and summer programs, while the competing Education Equality Project promotes the "schools only" strategy that is the current policy.

As our statement notes, and no one contests, "There is no evidence that school improvement strategies by themselves can close these gaps in a substantial, consistent and sustainable manner."

So, who represents the status quo?

*The writers are co-chairmen of the "Broader, Bolder Approach to Education" initiative.*

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**The Denver Post**  
**Ritter's education push modified — by degrees**  
**6.17.08**

John Ingold

Gov. Bill Ritter told the members of his education advisory panel Monday to focus their efforts on lowering the dropout rate and increasing the number of students who receive degrees after high school.

"You're going to have a lot of really hard work before you," Ritter said at a meeting of his P-20 Education Coordinating Council.

The panel, made up of educators, policy experts and business leaders, is charged with making recommendations for comprehensive education reform from preschool through college.

In giving the council new areas to focus on, Ritter and education leaders also touted the successes of the council's past efforts, which included recommendations for improving access to early childhood education and guidance counselors. Those suggestions were passed in bills this past legislative session that provided more money for preschool and full-day kindergarten programs and helped school districts hire more counselors.

State Sen. Nancy Spence, R-Centennial, said the dropout rate is the most pressing issue in Colorado education. According to recent figures, 26 percent of students who start high school don't finish. Spence said a recent report showing Colorado has the fastest-growing population of children in poverty only gives more urgency to finding ways to keep students in school.

State Rep. Nancy Todd, D-Aurora, agreed. "Trying to figure out ways that we can re-engage them is extremely important," she said.

Ritter also told the council that a student's education can't end with high school and urged council members to come up with ways for more students to receive college degrees or vocational certifications. "A high school diploma doesn't mean what it did 30 years ago," he said. "The workforce requirements have moved forward."

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### **Providence Journal New kind of school passes first test 6.17.08**

Cynthia Needham

PROVIDENCE — Experimental concepts like longer school days and 10-month academic years may be coming to Rhode Island with the advent of "mayoral academies" a new class of public schools free from union structures.

The measure has received preliminary approval from the House Finance Committee and is headed for a floor vote tomorrow.

Supporters say the endorsement marks the start of serious education reform in Rhode Island and is the biggest victory in more than a decade for alternative education in this state.

Supporters say the endorsement marks the start of serious education reform in Rhode Island.

But the teachers' unions fiercely object to the change, which they call an excuse to gut teacher protections they've worked years to safeguard.

Driving the plan is Cumberland Mayor Daniel J. McKee and a group of education experts who see the mayoral academy as a chance to "start from scratch" and design an entirely new kind of school to be used as a model for others like it.

The state already has 11 charter schools, alternative schools that increase options for students, often by using non-traditional teaching methods. Like those schools, the mayoral academy would draw students from several communities, in this case from the Blackstone Valley, and use a lottery to determine admission. It would be governed by a board of directors that would include mayors and town leaders and would be run by one of several established nonprofits including the Knowledge is Power Program or Achievement First, which advocates say have improved student performance in schools throughout the East Coast.

But unlike the state's other alternative schools — and indeed all its other schools — the mayoral academy would not be required to follow the strict prevailing wage and retirement statutes and seniority rules.

The academy would also be free, for example, to offer merit-based pay and six-day school weeks that supporters say have led to improvements in similar schools around the country.

To do all this, it would depend on a combination of local education funding and private donations that must be approved by the state's Board of Regents. The proposal itself does not include any funding.

The House Finance Committee last week gave preliminary support to the academy — a plan unveiled oddly enough in the new state budget.

"It's time to think outside the box," said House Majority Leader Gordon D. Fox through a spokesman. "As Franklin Roosevelt once said, 'it is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something!' I think it's worth trying this mayoral academy."

The state Education Department has said it is "satisfied" with the plan, provided it receives Regents approval.

In a striking reversal, the Rhode Island League of Charter Schools, which had previously expressed concerns about amending the state's charter school law, last night changed course and endorsed the academy.

But Robert A. Walsh, executive director of the National Education Association Rhode Island, said he was "blindsided" by the proposal.

"We're kind of in shock," he said "This is one of those last-minute surprises that you dread in the [budget] process." Since then, Walsh, a usually powerful voice on Smith Hill, says he's been unable to get Fox to return his phone calls.

Walsh and the American Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals have blasted what they call McKee's plan to "experiment with kids," while "ignoring decades of progress in setting standards for public education," and sacrificing vital teacher protections that could lead to lower-paying jobs with greater turnover.

"Mayor McKee seems to be motivated by a myth that there's some magic way to do it better," Walsh said, "... but a group of mayors that have no background in education," being given "carte blanche" to build a school is not the answer, he said.

Union critics are not alone. At last week's budget hearing before the House Finance Committee, the proposal was the most fervently contested of the 39 budget articles. Five of the 15 committee members voted against the proposal, with two others saying they're worried that it skirts labor practices and may siphon money from already struggling school districts.

When the measure hits the House floor tomorrow, lawmakers are likely to debate its merits at length.

But McKee calls the unions' reactions "scare tactics."

The mayor got the idea for the new school while earning a master's degree at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government several years ago, soon enlisting help from Brown University education Prof. Martin West and Bryan Hassel, of the education research firm Public Impact, who authored a 19-page proposal submitted to lawmakers.

The report highlighted some dismal facts: school spending in Rhode Island is the seventh-highest in the country, yet Education Week ranked the system here 40th in the nation. It also noted that the state's charter school law is among the most stringent. Until the end of this month, when a sunset provision kicks in, there is an all-out moratorium on opening new schools of this kind.

Mayoral academy supporters say it's time to break away from that status quo.

"If these schools are bad for teachers, why would they get 20 teachers applying for every spot," asked Board of Regents member Angus Davis, referring to an Achievement First-run school in New Haven, Conn., that saw a slew of teaching applicants when it opened several years ago.

Other Rhode Island leaders to support the program include Progreso Latino chief executive officer Ramon Martinez and Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce President Laurie White. Today the group will hold a rally at the State House to celebrate lawmakers' willingness to give their idea a shot.

"Based on their desire to recruit the best teachers, engage parents as partners and put student achievement first, I believe it is important to give them the opportunity to develop their plan for ultimate approval by the Board of Regents," Fox said.

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### **The Morning Call**

**School may mirror work day. Pleasant Valley principal suggests changing hours.**

**6.17.08**

Andrew C. Martel

A Pleasant Valley Schools principal wants to offer students a school day that matches their parents' work day.

Students at the district's intermediate school would be able to arrive as early as 6 a.m. and stay into the evening under the plan Principal Jim Storm shared Thursday

with the board.

About 30 fifth- through seventh-graders were to board a bus every afternoon and head to an after-school program at Pleasant Valley Elementary School, Storm said. But he said having an after-school on site would be more convenient and "age-appropriate."

"When the kids go to the elementary school, they feel like they're going back to the primary," he said. "It's not a motivator."

After-school day care is important in the district, where many families commute into New York City for work, Storm said.

"A lot of times when we have to call a parent to pick up their child, we have to stay with them for the rest of the afternoon," he said.

Storm said that the before- and after-school would be on a second floor, near a drop-off and pickup point. The room would have some games and activities, but also would have desks and computers for children to do homework.

Storm said he hopes that room also could be used as a tutoring area, which could expose more students to the after-school day-care program.

Board members were receptive to the proposal.

Board President Michelle Palmer asked how students would be able to get into the building as early as 6 a.m. Storm said custodians might have to be at the school to let students in.

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### **The Wall Street Journal Not in my school yard 6.17.08**

James Taranto

When Bill Clinton ran for president in 1992, he notably dissented from liberal orthodoxy on welfare and the death penalty. Many observers have been wondering if Barack Obama will follow Clinton's example. They frequently raise school choice as a cause Obama could take up to show his independence from Democratic interest groups.

It doesn't look as if that's going to happen, as ABC News's Jake Tapper reports:

On the same day that he was extolling the need to shake up the "status quo" in education, Obama also defended his opposition to school vouchers.

"We don't have enough slots for every child to go into a parochial school or a private school. And what you would see is a huge drain of resources out of the public schools," Obama said.

[John] McCain advocates giving every parent a voucher to essentially choose which school they'd like to send their child. Obama, whose two daughters attend private school, said that idea would crush the public school system entirely.

"But what I don't want to do is to see a diminished commitment to the public schools to the point where all we have are the hardest-to-teach kids with the least involved parents with the most disabilities in the public schools," he said. "That's going to make things worse, and we're going to lose the commitment to public schools that I think have been so important to building this country."

Our colleague Bill McGurn notes that Congress is on the verge of killing a small voucher program in the District of Columbia, where "parents have a question for Mr. Obama. Is Mr. Change-You-Can-Believe-In going to let his fellow Democrats take away the one change that is working for them?"

The answer is almost certainly yes. And while it may be that Obama is an orthodox liberal beholden to the teachers unions, there is another reason he is highly unlikely to embrace school choice: Unlike welfare reform and the death penalty, it is not popular.

Measures to establish school vouchers have appeared on statewide ballots numerous times over the past two decades, and they have always failed overwhelmingly--most recently, by 62% to 38% in conservative Utah. No doubt this has been partly the result of well-funded opposition by teachers unions. But there is an important element of self-interest as well.

Under the current system, parents of sufficient means do exercise choice--by buying homes in areas with good public schools or, as in the Obamas' case, by sending their children to private schools. A voucher program offers little to those who already have choice. Indeed, it threatens their interests in various ways.

If anyone is free to go to any school, a great benefit of owning a home in a suburb with superior schools vanishes--and with it, part of the home's value. What is more, parents who have invested large sums of money keeping their kids out of failing inner-city schools do not necessarily want their taxes used to pay for inner-city children to attend their own children's schools.

Such motives are not noble, but they are real, and Obama no doubt is well aware of them. We guess saying so makes us a cynic.

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### **The New York Times Report sees cost in some academic gains 6.18.08**

Sam Dillon

A new study argues that the nation's focus on helping students who are furthest behind may have produced a Robin Hood effect, yielding steady academic gains for low-achieving students in recent years at the expense of top students.

The study, to be released on Wednesday, compared trends in scores on federal tests for the bottom 10 percent of students nationwide with those for the top 10 percent and said those at the bottom moved up faster than those at the top.

In tests of fourth-grade reading from 2000 to 2007, for instance, the scores of the lowest-achieving students increased by 16 points on a 280-point scale, compared with a gain of three points for top-achieving students, according to the study, by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a research organization in Washington.

The period of big gains for low achievers and minimal ones for high achievers coincides with the federal education law known as No Child Left Behind, which took effect in 2002. The study said that while it was impossible to know whether the law caused those scoring patterns, such a result would hardly be surprising, since the law made it a goal to reduce the gap separating low-scoring, poor and minority students from higher-scoring white students.

Under the law, schools are required to bring increasing percentages of students to proficiency in reading and math each year or face sanctions that can include the firing of staff members. As a result, many schools organize instruction around helping low-performing students reach minimal proficiency.

In the debate over the law, little attention has been paid to the languid growth among high-achieving students, a trend with troubling implications for the nation's economic competitiveness.

"This is like sports," said Chester E. Finn Jr., the institute's president, who served in the Education Department under President Ronald Reagan. "If the only goal of a sports program is to get people over a three-foot hurdle, why would anybody be coached to get over a four-foot hurdle? They wouldn't. So those who can already sail over a three-foot hurdle have no incentive to do anything except to sleep late."

The report included results of a survey of a nationally representative sample of 900 teachers. Seven in 10 teachers said their schools were more likely to focus on struggling students than average or advanced students when tracking achievement data and trying to raise test scores. And about three-quarters of the teachers surveyed said they agreed with this statement: "Too often, the brightest students are bored and under-challenged in school — we're not giving them a sufficient chance to thrive."

Amy Wilkins, a vice president at Education Trust, which lobbies for policies to help close the achievement gap, said the gains by low achievers should be applauded. "My concern is that this report makes it seem like we have to choose between seeking equity and excellence," she said. "We need to strive for both."

Susan Traiman, director of education policy at the Business Roundtable, a group that represents business executives, said the challenge was to improve the ability of schools to educate students across a range of levels.

"We're producing progress at the bottom, and we need to maintain that," Ms. Traiman said, "but we need to ratchet up the performance of students at every achievement level if we're going to be competitive."

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**San Francisco Chronicle**  
**Teacher interns 'highly qualified,' judge says**  
**6.18.08**

Bob Egelko

A federal judge upheld Bush administration education rules Tuesday that classify more than 10,000 teaching interns in California, and tens of thousands more nationwide, as "highly qualified teachers" and allow them to remain in classrooms.

The ruling rejects a lawsuit filed last year by a group of low-income families in Richmond, Hayward and Los Angeles who argued that the government's regulations conflicted with federal law and saddled schools serving low-income and minority students with a large number of inexperienced, noncredentialed teachers. The families cited the No Child Left Behind law, the centerpiece of President Bush's education program, which requires all teachers to hold "full state certification."

But U.S. District Judge Phyllis Hamilton of San Francisco said the law does not define state certification and allows the federal government to decide whether teachers in supervised training programs could be considered certified.

"Congress never stated that teachers must complete any particular program to be considered as having 'full state certification,'" said Hamilton, an appointee of former President Bill Clinton.

She said Bush's Department of Education had interpreted the law reasonably and noted that Congress has not objected since the department's regulations took effect in January 2003.

Attorney John Affeldt of the nonprofit Public Advocates firm said the plaintiffs probably will appeal the ruling to the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The lawsuit seeks to invalidate the department's regulations nationwide.

"Providing all students with highly qualified teachers is the only way to ensure that no child is left behind," Affeldt said. "Defining teachers in training as 'highly qualified' violates both the letter and spirit of the law, primarily to the detriment of low-income students of color."

U.S. Department of Education spokeswoman Samara Yudof said the ruling will help all students "by continuing to attract high-quality teachers into the teaching profession."

The rules the judge upheld allow school districts, "particularly those in high-need areas, to meet the demand for highly qualified teachers by tapping into the talents and enthusiasm of experienced experts in various professions and recent college graduates," Yudof said in a statement.

No Child Left Behind, which took effect in 2002, is best known for requiring states to penalize schools unless increasing numbers of students raise their scores on standardized tests each year. A lesser-known provision requires all teachers to be "highly qualified," which consists of holding a state license and full state certification.

The federal regulations allow interns, participating in supervised training programs of up to three years, to be considered highly qualified. Studies in California have shown the heaviest concentrations of interns are in inner-city schools, where the state's shortage of experienced teachers is most acute.

Parents, students and advocacy groups represented by Public Advocates have sued California education officials twice in previous years, saying they were certifying teachers who failed to meet the federal standards. The suits succeeded in blocking state efforts to grant highly qualified status to teachers with emergency credentials, and to about 4,000 instructors whose internship programs fell short of established criteria.

Their third and latest suit, filed in federal court, argued that the requirement of "full certification" should apply only to teachers who have completed training programs. Hamilton disagreed, noting that the law specifically allows "alternative routes to certification." She found that federal officials had reasonably interpreted that language to include supervised interns.

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**The Denver Post**  
**Focus on Education**  
**6.18.08**

Liane Morrison

Re: "Learning how to escape poverty," June 12 editorial.

The Post made an insightful connection between child poverty and our state's lackluster commitment to education. The Post observes that Colorado "undervalues" education, but then asserts that this does not mean Colorado "underfunds" its schools. "K-12 funding," the Post concludes, "has grown at a welcome pace."

This view of K-12 funding in Colorado just doesn't match up with reality in our school districts. Over the past several years, increases in school funding have not kept up with the skyrocketing costs of health care and energy.

As a result, school districts are again facing deep cuts and/or being forced to ask their voters for mill levy increases. The St. Vrain district may cut 85 teaching positions. Douglas County schools are making \$21 million in cuts.

This pain is borne out by the stories we hear from around the state: teachers whose own children qualify for free and reduced lunch; districts that lose a successful literacy program when a grant runs out; schools that lose teachers to neighboring states that provide better pay and smaller classes.

Colorado's national rankings in such measures as student-teacher ratio (38th) and funding for higher education (48th) similarly illustrate both the undervaluing and underfunding of public education.

Reversing Colorado's child poverty trend will require greater investment not only on both ends of the education system (preschool and higher ed), but throughout the entire education spectrum.

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**The Advertiser Tribune**  
**Governor plans education forums**  
**6.18.08**

Jill Goesche

BOWLING GREEN — Gov. Ted Strickland is pledging to host forums about the future of education, present his ideas to the state legislature and seek a ballot issue if legislators don't cooperate.

Strickland, speaking Tuesday afternoon at Bowling Green State University during the annual Buckeye Boys State program, said education at every level is the greatest challenge facing Ohio. He said he will focus on elementary and secondary education next year.

"It is a huge problem," he said. "It's been with us for over 10 years, since the Supreme Court first said our current system is not constitutional, and it is very controversial."

Strickland said issues with funding education can't be solved until the state builds public support, so he will host public forums around the state over the next several months. He said he will present his solution to legislators next year after the state hosts the discussions.

"If the legislature will not cooperate and help with this problem, I will collect signatures, and in the fall of 2009, we will have a ballot initiative," he said. "We'll take it to the people and give them a chance to respond."

After his presentation to Buckeye Boys State delegates, Strickland said he thinks Ohioans will be more inclined to support potential education reform if state leaders show they are serious about making changes to lead the state to having the best possible education system and about citizens getting "a dollar's worth for a dollar invested."

"It's really an approach that (has) two main parts: making sure that we reform our system of education in a way that provides the best possible educational experience for all of our young people and doing so in a way that is adequately and fairly funded, and it will not happen without the people of Ohio getting behind the effort," he said.

Strickland said a lot of work remains to be done because the issue does not yet have a consensus or an adequate level of support. But, he said he thinks leaders can build that over the next several months.

Tiffin City Schools Superintendent Donald Coletta said he plans to get involved in discussions and is looking forward to seeing local involvement in the process.

"I think it's very important that local officials get involved in those discussions so that people in Columbus are aware about how we feel about the school funding issue," he said.

The superintendent said the issue of over-reliance on property taxes to fund schools

needs a solution.

"Local taxpayers make a significant contribution to their local schools, and we need to do a better job of sharing that burden across the state of Ohio," he said.

Coletta said his school district works hard to support students across the continuum of services, from intervention to enrichment.

"We need support from the state to provide what every student needs to be successful," he said. "In some cases, that's intervention, and in other cases, that's enrichment. We need to provide for the needs of all students."

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### Education Week

#### 2 new coalitions seek influence on campaigns

6.18.08

David J. Hoff

**Brief Summary:** Two sets of distinguished educators and policy leaders released statements with differing answers last week to the question of whether schools should be held responsible for improving student achievement or should health and social programs step in to help ensure student's success. According to the article, both groups worked to inform and highlight the education debate in the 2008 presidential election, as well as to "influence the future of the No Child Left Behind Act and other policies of the next president."

*Education Week is a paid subscription publication. Please visit [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org) to access the article.*

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### Education Week

#### Providence, R.I., school projects found to overbill state by millions

6.18.08

**Brief Summary:** A new audit revealed the city of Providence has overbilled the state of Rhode Island for school construction projects by \$12.7 million since the 1990s. The school district faces a \$6.7 million deficit and may have to repay the state department of education following the audit.

*Education Week is a paid subscription publication. Please visit [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org) to access the article.*

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### Education Week

#### Showing what they know; In Rhode Island, performance-based assessments are now required for high school graduation.

6.18.08

Scott J. Cech

**Brief Summary:** In addition to class grades and scores on the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP), Rhode Island seniors must choose and pass two of three performance-based assessments. These assessments include "a portfolio of work selected from their four years of high school, a senior project, and a comprehensive course assessment," according to the article.

*Education Week is a paid subscription publication. Please visit [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org) to access the article.*

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### Education Week Project aims to improve H.R. systems in big districts 6.18.08

Lesli A. Maxwell

**Brief Summary:** Two education experts have launched Strategic Management of Human Capital, an organization to transform how the nation's largest schools recruit and groom school leaders, which they argue is key to student achievement. The main focus of the group will be to develop and advocate strategies to change the old systems for high teachers, principals and other school leaders in the 100 largest school districts. The co-directors say that student achievement will remain stagnant without recruiting the best talents and trainers that support the school or district's academic-improvement strategy.

*Education Week is a paid subscription publication. Please visit [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org) to access the article.*

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### Education Week HBO film examines school in NCLB era 6.18.08

**Brief Summary:** A new documentary on HBO attempts to answer if No Child Left behind is the right tool for improving education, especially in schools struggling the most in high-poverty urban areas. In "Hard Times at Douglass High: A No Child Left behind Report Card," scheduled to air June 23, filmmakers Alan and Susan Raymond spent the 2004-2005 academic year filming student life at Frederick Douglass High School, a high school in Baltimore's 82,000-student system. The documentary works to highlight the challenges facing the students and high school.

*Education Week is a paid subscription publication. Please visit [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org) to access the article.*

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### The Wall Street Journal Yellow buses put schools in the red 6.19.08

Anne Marie Chaker

The pain at the pump is hitting those too young to drive.

In Nebraska, Bellevue School District is budgeting \$600,000 to cover fuel costs for school buses next school year, compared with \$250,000 a year ago. Kentucky's Bowling Green Independent Schools is budgeting 36% more for fuel compared with last year. The Durham, N.C., public schools budgeted \$3.3 million for fuel, more than twice what was budgeted a year ago.

"I've never seen anything escalate this quick," says Hank Hurd, the Durham district's chief operating officer. "There's no way for a school district to absorb those kinds of increases."

The 2007-08 school year has come to a close, but as superintendents across the country finalize their budgets for the fall, many are projecting major spikes in a number of areas -- cafeteria food and heating oil, for example. Perhaps the greatest bump is for diesel, which fuels the yellow buses that bring kids to school in the first place.

Some 475,000 school buses transport 25 million children -- more than half of the country's schoolchildren -- each day, and cover 4.3 billion miles a year, says the American School Bus Council, a Washington, D.C.-based group that lobbies on behalf of the school-bus industry. And the cost of fueling all these vehicles has a direct impact beyond the bus.

Bowling Green has cut back a teaching position and ordered fewer new textbooks. Pennsylvania's Palisades School District will start charging kids extra when they go on field trips. The Bellevue district in Nebraska will skip a planned roofing job and defer replacing some old-but-still-functional boilers.

Faced with budget shortfalls, many administrators will try to avoid cutting back "core" subject areas, such as math and reading, and turn to slashing "enrichment" programs -- like field trips to the theater. That hurts kids' motivation, says Paul Houston, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators, based in Arlington, Va. "Most kids don't go to school to learn math," he says. "It's the motivators to stay in school that are the things that get cut out first."

### Revenue Shortfalls

School budgets are already reeling from projected shortfalls in state revenue, which can typically make up anywhere from about one-third to two-thirds of district budgets. This coming fiscal year, 23 states are projecting gaps -- where revenues are expected to be lower than expenditures -- compared with 16 last year, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Local revenue sources, often tied to property-tax revenues, are also suffering from the real-estate slowdown.

In the 2001 recession, when school districts faced slackening state revenues, they could coast from the run-up in real-estate values, which translated into higher property-tax receipts. But today, real-estate values are falling in much of the country, leaving no safety valve for schools.

"State budgets will be pressed, but passing that on to local governments will be difficult, because their traditional sources of revenue are weakened," says Daniel Thatcher, research analyst at the state legislatures group.

The Bellevue district, which receives about a quarter of its budget from local property

taxes, expects the typical 7% to 9% annual increase in assessments to slow to less than half of that.

"We're expected to do more with less money," says Superintendent John Deegan.

Gas prices jumped so quickly this year that many districts overspent their fuel budgets. Alabama's Jacksonville School District says it expects to go well over the \$450,000 it had budgeted for transportation.

State funds were supposed to cover diesel fuel, but the money ran short by April, forcing the district to start supplementing that with local revenue sources. By the time the fiscal year ends on Sept. 30, Superintendent Eric Mackey expects to have overspent the fuel budget by \$51,000. That, combined with an overall reduction in state funds for next year's transportation budget, means fewer new textbooks for students and certain jobs that won't be filled.

Fuel prices that continue to rise will only put more pressure on transportation budgets.

"We have indications that ridership should be increasing next year, because the alternative to riding a bus is mom driving to school," says Bob Riley, executive director of the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services.

Increases in prices and ridership make it difficult to predict budgetary expenses. That means when negotiating with bus companies, school districts sometimes have to gamble whether to lock in a rate or keep it floating with what's current. Palisades for the first time locked in this year -- at a fixed \$4.33 a gallon. While that's 58% more than the average \$2.74 budgeted last year, business administrator Jill Ruch says the decision was propelled by the fear that costs will continue to rise.

Companies that manufacture school buses say they are feeling the impact of high gas prices, too, as fewer districts have money left in their transportation budgets to replace older vehicles with new ones. Thomas Built Buses Inc., a school bus manufacturer in High Point, N.C. and unit of Germany's Daimler AG, says that sales are down 10% compared with this time a year ago. "And it could have another 10% impact next year," says Ken Hedgecock, vice president of sales, marketing and service.

In addition to fuel prices, the cost of food is creating budgetary woes. The government recently reported that April's 0.9% increase in food prices from the previous month was the fastest pace in 18 years -- a reflection of global pressures, from drought in Australia to increased demand in India and China.

### Bring More Lunch Money

Durham district's cafeteria program has never been a big moneymaker, but is projecting an unprecedented \$750,000 loss for the current school year. That's compared with a \$300,000 loss the previous year and a gain of \$100,000 the year before. That will mean a 25% increase in lunch prices for next school year, Mr. Hurd says.

Pennsylvania's Palisades School District is expecting to raise lunch prices by 25 cents, pending a school-board vote, bringing the cost of lunch to \$2.50 for elementary and \$3 for middle- and high-school students. That comes on top of the

50-cent increase the students saw this past school year. This coming year's expected increase is due to the rising cost of milk and wheat-based products, says Meri Hedrick, director of food services and transportation for the district.

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**Alberta Lea Tribune**  
**Minnesota sends message on No Child Left Behind**  
**6.19.08**

Ken Peterson

The Albert Lea school board feels that student achievement is very important, and we are accountable for the educational outcomes of students. One of our goals is to identify measurable achievement goals for every student. It is my feeling that the 2001 federal accountability requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act is not an appropriate way to measure real student achievement each year.

While the law has great intentions, not every state has the same expectations for success, and states do not have the same tests. However, the strongest concern I have is for the expectations for success in reading and math set by NCLB for every student, despite their English language skills or learning challenges.

Primarily because of applying these testing expectations to many special groups of students including, new English language learners and special education students, more than a third of the schools in Minnesota missed their state imposed testing target in 2007. It is predicted that the number of schools missing their target will continue to increase this year.

In the 2008 legislative session, a House version of the budget bill called for Minnesota to opt out of NCLB, but a pullout could result in the state reportedly losing \$219 million in federal education funding.

So what exactly were Minnesota lawmakers trying to do? I think they were attempting to send a message to the U.S. Congress that despite good intentions of NCLB, many Minnesotans are frustrated with this federal legislation. Minnesotans know that their schools and students are scoring very well by many other indicators.

Over this past year, our district staff has been working very hard to increase student achievement as measured by these state tests. Our staff works very hard to help each student achieve educational success. Vision Driven Action Plans have been utilized for several years by all our teachers. A part of each plan has been improving student achievement in reading and math.

Besides individual teacher action plans, each school also sets goals for student achievement. Our teachers and administrators analyze their student test data to develop instructional strategies to help all students increase their level of achievement.

Professional development is an important tool to reach our district student achievement goals. While each teacher is highly qualified, continued study and research is essential for them to implement the best teaching strategies to help each student reach his academic goals for the year.

Teachers use their work the with state's Alternative Teacher Professional Pay System program to aid their research and study. Recently the Minnesota Department of Education approved our district ATPPS plan for year three and commended our district and teachers' efforts. The plan included professional development, peer observations, new team/teaching strategies, indicators to measure student achievement and much more. Academic growth by students was measured in reading and math that shows good advancement by students from fall to spring.

NCLB must shift from being a program of consequences and sanctions to one that helps students achieve high expectations such as our district uses with its fall to spring growth goals.

If it is continued, NCLB also should be fully funded by the federal government to help school districts reach the educational goals set by our state testing or change the rules.

Our schools are faced with growing sets of challenges; however, we do not receive the dollars needed to accomplish these expectations. Despite the concerns of this legislation, political leaders, lobbyists and educators predict Minnesota won't be getting rid of NCLB any time soon.

Please realize that our staff is dedicated and works very hard to have all students achieve more and become great citizens in our community. The board will continue to monitor "benchmarks" toward the district's student achievement goals. Soon we will be updating our Web site to show our progress toward reaching our student achievement goals in reading and math.

Ken Petersen is the chairman of the Albert Lea school board.