



Headlines

8.29.08 — 9.05.08

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| 8 | 8.31.08 | <u>Tomorrow's leaders are today's gifted; they are being ignored</u> | The Tennessean | Camilla P. Benbow (Op Ed) |
| | | Excerpt: In June, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute released the results of two studies confirming what educators have suspected for some time: During the era of No Child Left Behind, America's gifted students have not made the same gains as lower-achieving learners. | | |
| 9 | 8.31.08 | <u>Multiple after-school programs are not as efficient, cost-effective as one would be</u> | The Modesto Bee | John Ervin and Dave Cooperider |
| | | Excerpt: "All kids are at risk." These wise words should be embraced by anyone with any sense of parental or social responsibility. | | |

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| 10 | 9.01.08 | <u>2 plus 2 equals less for schools, families</u> | San Diego Union-Tribune | Maureen Magee |
| | | Excerpt: A shiny red apple for the new teacher? Maybe not in this economy. | | |
| 11 | 9.01.08 | <u>Some school years go beyond state-required 180 days</u> | The Philadelphia Inquirer | Dan Hardy |
| | | Excerpt: By tradition, Labor Day marks the great divide between an 11-week summer vacation and the start of school for most students. | | |
| 12 | 9.01.08 | <u>Administrative management capacity in out-of-school time organizations: An exploratory study</u> | Youth Today | Nick Drymalski |
| | | Excerpt: At a time when successful programs are being encouraged to serve more and more youth, out-of-school time (OST) program providers need an influx of investment in their administrative management capacity to be able to support, develop and expand their programs, according to this report. | | |
| 13 | 9.02.08 | <u>Changes ring in school year</u> | Chicago Tribune | Carlos Sadovi |
| | | Excerpt: When Chicago Public Schools students head back to class Tuesday, thousands will walk into a record number of revamped schools while many others will see dozens of newly hired faces after the district replaced teachers and principals at eight struggling schools. | | |
| 14 | 9.02.08 | <u>Chicago public school students skip class in show of activism</u> | Chicago Tribune | Carlos Sadovi, Tara Malone and Lisa Black |
| | | Excerpt: Sporting book bags and name tags, nearly 1,000 Chicago students on Tuesday got a tutorial in civic action aimed at spotlighting the disparities in Illinois public education as they missed the first day of city classes and instead attempted to register at two North Shore schools where educators and residents welcomed them. | | |

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| 15 | 9.02.08 | <u>Convention ad warns 'One Nation Left Behind'</u> | Campaign K-12 (Ed Week Blog) | Mark Walsh (Op Ed) |
| | | Excerpt: Strong American Schools, the group behind the ED in '08 campaign to boost debate about education in the presidential campaign, has a full-page ad in this morning's St. Paul Pioneer Press that bluntly says, "Our schools are failing." | | |
| 16 | 9.02.08 | <u>Spellings glad NCLB reauthorization didn't happen</u> | Campaign K-12 (Ed Week Blog) | Alyson Klein |
| | | Excerpt: U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings is glad that the No Child Left Behind Act wasn't reauthorized as scheduled last year, because "where we were headed would have been a bad reauthorization," she told Education Week today. | | |
| 17 | 9.02.08 | <u>New CPS school offers high-tech education</u> | Chicago Sun-Times | Rosalind Rossi |
| | | Excerpt: Freshmen won't need book bags filled with textbooks or even pencils and pens when they walk into the new Chicago public high school opening today in the old Austin High building. | | |
| 18 | 9.03.08 | <u>New games for young children focus on teaching manners, social skills</u> | The Canadian Press | The Canadian Press Staff |
| | | Excerpt: Trouble ensues for Curtis, a bright-eyed tot with a bandana and pirate's hat, when Pushy Pete elbows him at the amusement park and knocks his tokens down the drain. | | |
| 19 | 9.03.08 | <u>Meeks' school-funding protest moves from North Shore to Chicago corporations</u> | Chicago Tribune | Carlos Sadovi, Tara Malone and Lisa Black |
| | | Excerpt: The civics lesson for hundreds of Chicago Public Schools students who skipped the first day of classes to protest Illinois education funding shifts Wednesday from the North Shore to corporate America. | | |

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| 20 | 9.03.08 | <u>Democrats, teachers unions now divided on many issues</u> | USA Today | Greg Toppo |
| | | Excerpt: A funny thing happened to the Democratic Party on the way to an education platform: The party has visibly split with teachers unions, its longtime allies, on key issues. | | |
| 21 | 9.03.08 | <u>Pawlenty: Education key to U.S. standing</u> | Minneapolis Star Tribune | Emily Johns |
| | | Excerpt: Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty received a standing ovation from a largely Republican crowd on Tuesday morning after a speech about education in the United States and what needs to be done to regain America's standing as an education leader in the world. | | |
| 22 | 9.03.08 | <u>A more personal approach to learning</u> | Atlanta Journal-Constitution | Laura Diamond |
| | | Excerpt: Students in the fine arts program at Maynard Jackson High School recently pointed their toes and delicately bent their arms to copy the ballet moves demonstrated by their teacher. | | |
| 23 | 9.03.08 | <u>GOP Education platform echoes McCain's Agenda</u> | Campaign K-12 (Ed Week Blog) | Alyson Klein (Op Ed) |
| | | Excerpt: Now that the GOP convention is underway, the Republican party has given its official stamp of approval to an education platform that mirrors many of the K-12 proposals of Sen. John McCain of Arizona, the nearly nominee. | | |
| 24 | 9.03.08 | <u>Gingrich calls for 'Tripartisanship' to improve schools</u> | Campaign K-12 (Ed Week Blog) | Alyson Klein (Op Ed) |
| | | Excerpt: President Bush isn't the only Republican who believes in high academic standards and aggressive accountability won't end when President Bush leaves office. | | |
| 25 | 9.03.08 | <u>Out-of-school science</u> | Education Week | Ed Week Staff |
| | | Excerpt: A new study for the Noyce | | |

Foundation makes recommendations for policymakers and education leaders to judge the effectiveness of informal and after-school science programs.

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The Wall Street Journal **Raising the bar: How parents can fix education** **8.29.08**

Daniel Akst

Everyone, it seems, has a complaint about the schools. Indifferent bureaucracy, change-averse unions, faddish curricula, soaring school taxes matched with mediocre student performance -- the list is long and seemingly unchanging.

At the start of yet another school year, it's time for some radical change in your local schools -- a specific change that only parents can bring about. It's a thing already being done in some far-off countries but that remains strangely rare here in America. It's something I've tried -- and, despite the skepticism of friends and neighbors, it seems to work.

What is this miracle that lies within the reach of nearly every family? It's simple. All you have to do is to start insisting that your children fully apply themselves to their studies -- and commit yourself to doing your part. That means making sure they do all the work expected of them as well as their abilities allow. It also means making sure everything at home stands behind these principles and supports the idea of learning.

These will sound like obvious ideas. In fact, given all the distractions of modern life, it is a radical departure from the normal order of things. Let's face it: More than budgets or bureaucrats, more than textbooks or teachers, parents are the reason that kids perform as they do in school.

In a survey of the research, Michigan's Department of Education summarizes the findings neatly: "The most consistent predictors of children's academic achievement and social adjustment are parent expectations of the child's academic attainment and satisfaction with their child's education at school. Parents of high-achieving students set higher standards for their children's educational activities."

One great thing about this statement is that income should not matter, since almost any family can insist that conscientious schoolwork be Job One. The stereotype, of course, is of frantic upper-middle-class parents bombarding their precious little ones in utero with Mozart and then hectoring teachers and hiring tutors right up until the Harvard application essay.

But my impression is that many prosperous parents pay mere lip service to education. A study of elementary-school families last year in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* bears this out. Researchers at Brigham Young and the University of Michigan found that parents preferred teachers who make their children happy over those who emphasize academic achievement. My experience in a nonobsessive school district is consistent with this. Our family's intense focus on learning is

regarded warily by some parents, whose dissatisfactions with school are mostly about testing and creativity but never about a lack of foreign-language instruction or overall academic rigor. Indeed, teachers have reported watering down the public middle-school curriculum in response to parental complaints that it was too difficult.

The lack of demand for serious schooling is the least of it. Too many kids are growing up in homes with little emphasis on reading, learning or culture. Nielsen Media Research reports that Americans ages 2 to 17 spend an average of three hours a day watching television, which is way too much for any good student. In a study of 4,508 middle-school students published two years ago in the journal *Pediatrics*, researchers found that weekday TV and videogames were strongly correlated with poor school performance.

Reading among the young is also in decline. The National Endowment for the Arts, in a sobering report last year, found that a mere 30% of 13-year-olds read for fun daily (a number that has been shrinking), while 13% hardly ever read for fun (a number that has been growing). The adults weren't much better; by their own report, Americans aged 15 and over spent less than 22 minutes a day on voluntary reading of any kind.

Is it any wonder that our children aren't doing as well in school as we'd like? Can we really blame the educational system, with all its shortcomings, for the failure of American children to emerge from years of costly schooling with a reasonable level of knowledge about the world, or with the ability to read, write, think logically and handle math? I don't think so.

Yet with some parental effort, children can do better. Lord knows I'm no Ozzie Nelson, and "My Three Sons" involved one more than I could ever handle. But I can convey something of my own family's experiment in education, which so far seems to be working.

The first thing we did was to tell our kids that we had no doubt they could do well, and that in fact we expect it of them. We declared that their education is our family's highest priority, and that during the school year everything in our home will revolve around their success in school. We reiterate these messages regularly, and we communicate them to teachers and administrators, making clear that we want to be kept well-informed.

With some effort, we resist the impulse to "help" our boys much with their homework. Would doing push-ups for them strengthen their arms? The same applies to schoolwork, whatever it is -- including science projects. But we make sure homework is done early, without loud music or other distractions. We're available for consulting, and while they're still young we review their work nightly.

We keep a tight lid on media. Computer time is limited, there's no gaming system, and during the school week virtually no television. Extracurricular reading is constantly encouraged, and we choose movies with care. For years now we've made a family project out of classic cinema, most of which is highly suitable for kids (and pleases grown-ups as well). "To Be or Not to Be" (1942), in which Carole Lombard and Jack Benny hilariously foil the Nazis, was recently a huge hit with our boys. They can have their jarring music, as long as there's no foul language or misogyny, but during family meals -- which we never miss -- they can get used to Mahler or Miles Davis.

We're also conscious that incentives matter. Like most kids, ours have spending money, cellphones and most other perks of prosperity. But none of these things are mandatory, and all parties understand that blowing off school will have a high cost. Extracurricular activities hinge on school performance too. Recently I heard from a friend that his teenage son, a superlative athlete, was getting poor grades, so I asked if they'd considered cutting back on sports. "I could never do that to him," my friend said, and I couldn't help thinking: "How could you not do it *for* him?"

We take the kids to museums and the like, but there's always room for athletics as well as silliness. An occasional brainless blockbuster at the mall on a rainy Sunday doesn't seem to be doing them any harm, and we spend ample time watching the Yankees and "The Simpsons." But it turns out that acing exams is lots of fun for kids too, and once they got going, my guys wanted to keep it up. Who knew?

Kids form lots of habits over the years, some good and some bad. What a nice surprise that doing well in school can be one of them.

Mr. Akst is a writer in New York's Hudson Valley.

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Los Angeles Times **A statistical profile of Hispanic public school students** **8.29.08**

Mary MacVean

The number of such students nearly doubled from 1990 to 2006, to 20% of all public school students -- or 10 million students. In 2006, Hispanics were about half of all public school students in California, up from 36% in 1990. They were more than 40% of enrollment in Arizona.

Strong growth in Hispanic enrollment is expected to continue for decades, according to a recently released U.S. Census Bureau population projection. In 2050, there will be more school-age Hispanic children than school-age non-Hispanic white children.

Some findings from the Pew report, called, "One-in-Five and Growing Fast: A Profile of Hispanic Public School Students" and issued this week, follow:

Eighty-four percent of Hispanic public school students were born in the United States.

Seventy percent speak a language other than English at home.

Nearly one-in-five (18%) of all Hispanic students speak English with difficulty.

Fifty-seven percent of Hispanic students live in households with two parents, compared with 69% of non-Hispanic white students and 30% of non-Hispanic black students.

More than a quarter of Hispanic students (28%) live in poverty, compared with 16% of non-Hispanic students. In comparison, more than a third of non-Hispanic black students (35%) live in poverty and about one in 10 non-Hispanic white students live in a poor household.

Pew Hispanic Center is a non-partisan, non-advocacy research organization based in Washington, D.C., and is funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

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The New York Times On the Democratic Convention: Let's talk about education 8.29.08

Bruce Fuller

In this first installment of Education Watch, Bruce Fuller and Lance T. Izumi discuss what was and wasn't said in Denver about our school system. And Sandra Tsing Loh weighs in on her perspective. Go to Mr. Izumi's post and Ms. Loh's post.

Bruce Fuller is a professor of education and public policy at the University of California at Berkeley. (Full biography.)

In her speech Monday night at the Democratic National Convention, Michelle Obama detailed her rise from Chicago's South Side to entering college and then completing law school as evidence that "the American dream endures." As she said, "America should be a place where you can make it if you try."

The pitch was poetic and pragmatic, in part aimed at blue-collar voters, Ronald Reagan (or Hillary Clinton) Democrats who no longer see brighter futures or upward mobility for their children. Mrs. Obama's story — a fusion of her own fortitude and affirming public institutions — is compelling.

Better schools must continue to play a role for the next generation, she said, where every child will receive "a world-class education, from preschool to higher education."

But if the storyline is becoming more crisp and recognizable, it remains unclear how Mr. Obama would lift the public schools or stem tuition hikes that are dashing the hopes of working-class families.

Yolie Aguilar, a delegate from Los Angeles told me that it's her "greatest disappointment" at the convention. "I've got tons of stuff on the environment, health, veterans affairs," she said, "but zero on education."

And yet education remains among the top five issues on voters' minds, even as economic woes have swamped campaign stump speeches. Independent swing voters are disproportionately young, ranging from recent college graduates to new parents. They care deeply about the availability of child care, the quality of neighborhood schools and how to squirrel away enough savings to send their children to college.

But the Democratic policy platform reads more like the Treaty of Versailles than a decisive blueprint for improving public education. Like spending Labor Day with one's dysfunctional family, the party's education strategy avoids candor and sustains soothing ritual, fearing that a kin member may go ballistic.

Some notable shifts are apparent, although disguised in diplomatic word smithing. For example, in terrible schools where children's learning curves are flat, "we should find a quick and fair way — consistent with due process — to put another teacher in that classroom," said the platform's authors, led by Deval Patrick, the governor of

Massachusetts. I think it means that the Democrats believe incompetent teachers should be fired.

Taking a slap at President Bush's rendition of No Child Left Behind — which a majority of voters no longer support, according to a Gallup poll earlier this month — the platform committee promised to "end the practice of labeling a school and its students as failures and then throwing our hands up and walking away from them without having provided the resources and supports these students need." O.K., but is this the only fix for Washington's micromanaged way of trying to close racial achievement gaps?

The nation's divided gaggle of education interest groups often gets in the way of a unifying narrative about serious education reform. Speaking before the convention crowd, Reg Weaver, the outgoing president of the nation's largest teachers union, railed against the states' reliance on a "single, multiple choice and high-stakes test." He's speaking to his members rather than contributing to a shared understanding of how withering schools and colleges are dashing parents' hopes of upward mobility for their offspring.

Michelle Obama spoke with passion and authenticity about a nation that once dedicated itself to public institutions that equalized the life chances of all children, rather than reproducing class disparities. This fundamental value is part of the "thread that runs through all our hearts," she said.

But how will the Democrats return us to this promised land?

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The Wall Street Journal
Obama should focus on education reform
8.30.08

Brendan Miniter (Op Ed)

Barack Obama made history this week by becoming the first black man to claim the presidential nomination of a major American political party. He almost certainly won't be the last. Another rising -- and arguably more substantive -- star is former Tennessee Congressman Harold Ford Jr.

Mr. Ford is just 38 years old. But he's been thinking deeply about politics for a long time. In 2002, when he was a mere 32, the Tennessee congressman challenged his party in the House of Representatives to elect him leader, saying that Democrats were "O and five" in congressional elections because they needed to move to the political center.

He lost that race to California's Nancy Pelosi. But Mr. Ford continued to push his party to embrace a more muscular foreign policy (he voted for the Iraq war in 2003) and not shy away from entitlement reform (he was willing to talk to President George W. Bush about Social Security reform in 2005).

In 2006, after losing a bid for the Senate, he was tapped to be chairman of the Democratic Leadership Council. This was a post Bill Clinton once used to credential himself as a "Third Way," moderate Democrat on his way to the White House.

Mr. Ford is optimistic about the party's chances to control the House, Senate and

presidency come January. But he says the stakes for Democrats will only be higher if they're in charge: "If we don't produce, it is likely we won't hold the majorities in both places, and it could hurt our president's chances at re-election."

When I sat down with Mr. Ford at The Wall Street Journal's offices recently, I looked forward to hearing what he would say about the direction of his party and its liberal presidential nominee. I wanted to know what he thought of the party's leftward tilt on taxes, trade, energy and education.

Mr. Ford's answer: that his party was able to win control of Congress two years ago by running moderate Democratic candidates in Republican districts. That, he says, is what it needs to do to stay in power.

"If you look at the congressmen who won in 2006, the 'red to blue' as they call them as a group, not those who may have succeeded Democrats and are holding safe Democratic seats," Mr. Ford said, "and you consider the special election races this year, in the last couple of months in Mississippi, Louisiana and Illinois, what you will see clearly in the ascendancy in the party is a moderate, mainstream, Democratic approach to taxes, to fiscal policy, to spending as a whole, to national security, foreign policy.

"I would contend that the Democratic majority is due to a moderate, mainstream, conservative philosophy -- conservative, a lot of people interpret that the wrong way, but just a moderate mainstream philosophy in the party being on the ascendancy, as opposed to [a philosophy that is] sometimes further to the left, some may call liberal."

On the numbers, I couldn't disagree. House Speaker Pelosi owes her gavel today to Rep. Heath Shuler of North Carolina, and about a score of other conservative or moderate Democrats who won by promising voters a certain level of independence from the Democratic Party's liberal wing. (Mr. Shuler won his seat in 2006 by telling voters he wouldn't "automatically" vote for Mrs. Pelosi to be speaker if elected.)

But I'm skeptical of a conservative ascendancy in a party that promises tax hikes for the "wealthy," balks at expanding domestic oil drilling, and opposes nearly every form of school choice that would give poor children a way out of failing public schools. So I press Mr. Ford on the apparent divergence between the DLC's moderate agenda and that of Mr. Obama and the Democratic Party.

"I don't think there are as many differences as people may think," he said pointing to Mr. Obama's recent proposal, sketched out on these pages, to return the top capital gains tax rate to 20% -- a rate almost a third lower than the rate set by Ronald Reagan in the 1986 tax reform. He also cites Mr. Obama's support for teacher merit pay.

"How we build an innovative agenda is what I am most concerned about," Mr. Ford said. "There are some slight differences . . . There is a real difference on trade. I want to be clear, we don't make ourselves more competitive by closing our borders."

But, he said of Mr. Obama on education, "I think he is open-minded. Let me put it this way, he hasn't come out in opposition [to school choice]. He is a pragmatist. . . . He's not looking to antagonize anyone. But he's not afraid to stir things up."

Education is one of Mr. Ford's top priorities. That's because he sees fixing the public-school system as something that is essential for a dynamic, competitive economy --

and as the means for creating opportunities for millions of kids.

Education is also an issue he is passionate about because, in part, he launched his political career from inside a kindergarten classroom.

In 1996, Mr. Ford ran for a seat in Congress that his father was vacating. But he soon found that being a 26-year-old scion of a political family had its disadvantages. He was attacked on talk radio for his lack of experience, and he had trouble lining up speaking engagements until finally two women lined up graduations for him at which to speak.

"I spoke to 32 kindergarten graduations. True story," he says now with a laugh. "It was a weird thing, because these kids couldn't vote. I didn't know how I was helping myself. But I didn't have anywhere else to be, so I spoke at the graduations. . . ."

"Whatever works, in various communities, is what I support," Mr. Ford told me. "On the education front, if we are unwilling to take head on the issues that are facing our schools, meaning teacher quality, meaning classroom size, meaning accountability, then we kid ourselves if we think we're going to solve these problems.

"We adopt a one-size-fits-all [model] in education, and it doesn't work. . . . I love charters, the charter school idea. Why? Because in some areas it actually works and it works well."

In Congress, Mr. Ford supported creating a school-voucher program in Washington, D.C., that is now being used by hundreds of students to get a better education. It enjoys the support of the city's Democratic Mayor Adrian Fenty. But Democrats in Congress threatened to kill the program this year by starving it of federal funds. So I asked Mr. Ford if the program will be crushed by Democrats in the near future.

"It probably won't be," he said. "Don't get me wrong, they've had to fight to keep it alive. They had to go up against their own member of Congress, their own delegate, who is opposed to it. The mayor wants it, and I view the mayor of D.C. almost like a governor because it is essentially a state."

Mr. Ford stresses that education is among "the types of things Democrats are going to have to focus on . . . Not because we want to win elections, but because the country needs it.

"Without a serious, broad-based competitiveness plan for the country that organizes around energy and education, the country will continue to falter. The next 10 to 15 years, we'll be fine. But if you look past that 15 year horizon, we cannot expect to be the No. 1 center for innovation, for technology, for job creation, the No. 1 economic center, indefinitely."

What Mr. Ford sees in Mr. Obama is the potential to break the logjam on education and other issues that has prevented fundamental reforms from passing in Washington. "I think the country could invest in him and may be willing to align itself with his vision, if he has a broad enough vision to change the country 10, 20, 30 years down the road.

"And those changes will obviously have to involve education, energy . . . entitlement reform, and will involve, frankly, thinking about these things outside of a Democrat/Republican box. . . . I think he may have the 12-to-18 month window [to pass real reforms]. He's gotta put some runs up on the board for people to say, 'I'm

going to stick with him. I'm staying with him."

What's his advice for Mr. Obama? "Be bold, be daring and be big. Be realistic. . . . Lay out where you want to take us and say 'Here's why I believe we need to do this.'"

Moving forward, he said, "We got the majority, the question now is can we govern. And to govern, we're going to have to realize that that mainstream, moderate, ascendancy in the party has got to be reflected in the kind of priorities that we set."

Article 5

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Los Angeles Times **Parents go online to see where the lunch money goes** **8.30.08**

Alana Semeuls

Lunch money, like your keys and your grandmother's bifocals, is one of those things that suddenly disappears, leaving you with no idea where it went.

As many kids head back to school next week, parents will again ask the question they have pondered for ages: What happens to said lunch money? Bullies? Pockets full of holes? Children who want too many Twinkies? Tighter household budgets are making it even more pressing to find the answer.

But at last, modern technology has solved the quandary. A program called MealpayPlus, from Horizon Software International of Duluth, Ga., lets parents track what their kids are buying with their lunch money and see exactly what they're eating. Parents can also control lunch purchases, nixing the junk food or the bug juice. More than 250 school districts in the nation use the system, including the Los Angeles Unified School District, which recently selected Horizon to provide its food service technology.

"If parents don't understand how their student goes through \$30 in 3 days, they can view their students' current account balance," said Ashley Steele, senior product coordinator for MealpayPlus.

Kids pay for their lunches with MealpayPlus in different ways, depending on the school district. Some will get a scan card. Others get a PIN. Some school districts will take images of students' fingerprints ...

... using biometrics and thus keep track of students' lunch spending that way.

Busy parents can go online and add money to their childrens' account. They can also flag foods their kids are allergic to and elect whether their child can buy only meals or stuff not included in the meal plan (such as snacks).

The Hacienda La Puente Unified School District in the San Gabriel Valley has used the service for a few years. Geri Dee, director of food services, said it has come in handy. For one, it cuts down on lines. For another, parents can make sure their kids are eating healthily. The service is also useful for that all-too-common situation when kids try to buy milk with \$100 bills.

"We have students, especially on the Hacienda Heights side, that will come in with a

\$100 bill to prepay for lunches," she said. "Parents like to know what their kids are eating with that."

The service also makes buying lunch less embarrassing for kids getting reduced-price meals, said Vera Iosua, an office manager at Hacienda La Puente USD. Last year she signed up her children, Chelsea, 16, and Howard, now 18, for MealpayPlus. Her kids only had to enter their PINs to pay for lunch, rather than fork over cash, which meant it was harder for other kids to tell that they were paying less for their meals.

It also meant -- she now knows -- that her son ate a lot of pizza for lunch. Sometimes he had a salad. It was a relief for Iosua to see that because she says her kids love to eat candy and chips, even for lunch. "I didn't want to give them money and have them use it on vending machines," she said. "I wanted them to buy lunch and have well-balanced meals."

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NTV (NE)

Omaha schools in running for urban education award 8.30.08

Associated Press Staff

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) - Omaha Public Schools is in the running for a nationwide award recognizing excellence in urban education.

The district is among three finalists for the Award for Urban School Board Excellence, given annually by the National School Boards Association's Council of Urban Boards. The award recognizes urban school districts that show progress in educating children and are role models in school board governance.

The other finalists are Chula Vista Elementary School District in California and the Brownsville Independent School District in Texas.

The winner will announced September 27th at a ceremony in Las Vegas.

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Los Angeles Times

Better education through innovation 8.31.08

Cory Booker, John Doerr and Ted Mitchell (Op Ed)

OP/Ed: Cory Booker, John Doerr & Ted Mitchell – Cory Booker is the mayor of Newark, N.J. John Doerr is a partner at the venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers. Ted Mitchell is chief executive of NewSchools Venture Fund and president of the California Board of Education.

In the summer of 1918, as tuberculosis, bubonic plague and a flu pandemic threatened America's newly crowded cities, the chemist Charles Holmes Herty took a walk through New York City with his colleague J.R. Bailey. Herty posed a question: Suppose Bailey discovered an exceptionally powerful medicine. What institution would allow him to take his breakthrough from lab experiment to widespread cure?

Bailey replied, "I don't know."

That alarming answer moved Herty to propose a visionary solution -- an institution that would encourage research and development throughout the country. It would find its value, Herty said, "in the stimulus which it gives" to research, thought and discovery by practitioners in the field.

Nearly a century later, that vision stands as the National Institutes of Health. Its record, from deciphering and mapping the human genome to finding the source of AIDS, leaves no doubt about the NIH's ability to stimulate innovation.

Today, the shame of our cities isn't bubonic plague; it's ignorance. In our urban areas, only one child in five is proficient in reading. On international tests, we rank behind the Czech Republic and Latvia; our high school graduation rate barely makes the top 20 worldwide. As columnist David Brooks has noted, educational progress has been so slow that "America's lead over its economic rivals has been entirely forfeited." Under-education may not end lives the way infectious diseases do, but it just as surely wastes them. For all the hard work of our good teachers, our system is failing to keep pace with the demands of a new century.

As our next president confronts this reality, he should look to Herty's inspiration. We need a new, results-driven mind-set at the Department of Education that will drive pure educational innovation and "scale up" proven experiments and novel ideas that work. The federal government stands in a unique position to meet these needs.

The evidence for making a national commitment to innovation in education is compelling. Today, many of the most promising solutions are emerging from entrepreneurial organizations that embrace freedom and accountability. Indeed, such social entrepreneurs represent a growing force. They have started nimble, typically nonprofit organizations that work in partnership with creative mayors and school superintendents.

Entrepreneurial charter schools such as KIPP, Uncommon Schools, Aspire, the Inner-City Education Foundation, the Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools and Green Dot demonstrate what a single-minded focus on excellence can achieve with low-income students. These public schools, open to all students, are dedicated to the idea that college success and wide career choices must be a reality regardless of the ZIP Code of a child's birth. And they are proving what's possible, sending students from the poorest neighborhoods to college at rates typical of far more affluent communities.

Other innovators also have taken a fresh look at the crucial question of how to attract, prepare and keep teachers and leaders in the toughest schools. Teach For America, for example, flips the conventional wisdom on teacher recruiting, making inner-city classrooms an object of hot competition for the nation's top college graduates. Likewise, New Leaders for New Schools has brought hundreds of new principals to the inner city. Organizations like these demonstrate how innovators can support improvement in our existing school systems -- an essential part of large-scale progress.

To call these solutions a drop in the bucket, as some critics do, is to miss the point. The federal government, through the NIH (and other programs such as the National Science Foundation, the Small Business Administration and the Defense Advanced Projects Research Agency), has proved that it can multiply innovations in many fields and spread the most successful ones. Yet, historically, the federal government has

constrained its investment in education entrepreneurship to comparatively small, isolated programs, limited efforts in a bureaucracy that resists change. To fix this, there are key steps the next president should take.

The first is to expand innovation incentives and free them from the earmarks and conditions that have blunted past initiatives. Too many innovators spend too much time and energy raising money to stay afloat and expand. Adequate incentives, coupled with rigorous accountability, would remedy this. We should include two complementary programs, a "Grow What Works" fund and a fund to provide research and development money for promising early stage initiatives. Today, the federal government invests less than \$1 billion annually in education innovation -- a paltry 0.2% of our \$500 billion total national spending on education. Compare that to the \$28 billion we spend on biomedical innovation, a full 1% of our \$2.6 trillion on healthcare.

Beyond new funding, the federal government must use its influence over state and local policy to sweep away regulations that hamper innovative thinking, such as caps on the number of public charter schools allowed and excessive restrictions on how teachers are trained and credentialed. In addition, it can use the power of the purse to direct competitive funds to states that embrace urgent innovation. States control 70% of public education funding; a push for state support of entrepreneurial education efforts could have a huge effect.

Finally, two efforts already underway must get a strong push from the next administration. One is the move toward a common set of standards for what students should be expected to know and be able to do: Every American child deserves to be educated to the same high standard, and innovators everywhere require a common target. Then, to make shared standards work, a national data infrastructure must be built to assess educational progress.

The enormously promising educational innovations sprouting across the country, from South L.A. to Newark, N.J., to New Orleans, cannot be allowed to remain exceptions -- pleasant human-interest stories about amazing but tiny programs. At a time of slipping national competitiveness, as whole communities are denied a chance at America's opportunities, results-driven, urgent change must be an ethos that pervades national education policy.

The starting point will be the choice of the next secretary of Education. He or she must be an entrepreneurial thinker, not necessarily someone who's run a business but someone who grasps the importance of combining the freedom to innovate with close attention to results, and will welcome the efforts of a new generation of educators.

The American national spirit embraces improvement, pragmatism and merit; we figure out what works, and we build on it. It's the spirit that moved Charles Herty to argue for an institute to stimulate breakthroughs in American health. If we are to maintain our standing in the world, and do right by our people, our next president must spark our education system with the same spirit of invention.

The Tennessean **Tomorrow's leaders are today's gifted; they are being ignored** **8.31.08**

Camilla P. Benbow (Op Ed)

OP/Ed: Camilla P. Benbow – Camilla P. Benbow, Ed.D ., is dean of Vanderbilt University's Peabody College of education and human development. She served as vice chairman of the National Mathematics Advisory Panel and is a member of the National Science Board. She was also a panelist at the National Science and Technology Summit held in Oak Ridge Aug. 18-19.

In June, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute released the results of two studies confirming what educators have suspected for some time: During the era of No Child Left Behind, America's gifted students have not made the same gains as lower-achieving learners. This has negative implications for U.S . economic competitiveness and the country's ability to foster the innovations that have made it a world leader.

The first of the Fordham studies showed that from 2000-2007, fourth-grade students in the 90th percentile (high achievers) gained only 3 points on the reading test of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, the Nation's Report Card). Low-achieving students, those in the 10th percentile, gained 16 points. High achieving eighth-graders gained 5 points on the math test; low-achieving students gained 13. Fordham's second study helps explain why. Researchers Steve Farkas and Ann Duffett asked teachers which students were the top priority at their schools. Sixty percent said struggling students were a top priority. Only 23 percent cited academically advanced students as a top priority. The difference was even greater when teachers were asked, 'Who is most likely to get one-on-one attention from teachers?' Only 5 percent named advanced students, while 81 percent said struggling students were most likely to get their attention.

While it is appropriate and imperative to focus on struggling students, we cannot pretend that all of our students are receiving an equal education. Every student deserves the resources, the opportunities and the quality of teaching that will enable them to succeed to the best of their ability. The advances of one group should not come at the expense of another. At present, however, our gifted students are being ignored.

The U.S . needs today's best 13-year-olds to foster tomorrow's innovations.

The Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth, which I co-direct with David Lubinski, is a 50-year longitudinal study of a group of 5,000 talented students who were identified as early as 1972, at age 13.

Through follow-up surveys, we have shown that when talented students are challenged and supported, they earn doctorates, publish scientific and mathematical papers, create inventions and receive patents, and are rewarded with faculty positions at top universities at a higher rate than a more typical control group who were identified as graduate students.

In its review of the scientific literature, the National Math Panel observed support for differentiated and accelerated math curricula for gifted students. Motivation is key, but it is hard to imagine our gifted students feeling motivated to learn if they cannot

get a teacher's attention.

Unfortunately, the era of accountability has had the unintended consequence of putting gifted students at risk in today's classrooms.

Failure to meet their needs puts our economic future at risk, as well.

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The Modesto Bee

Multiple after-school programs are not as efficient, cost-effective as one would be

8.31.08

John Ervin and Dave Cooperider

Editor's note: This article was written by John Ervin and Dave Cooperider, two of The Bee's third-quarter visiting editors. Soon we will be inviting applicants for our 2009 visiting editor program. Watch this page for details.

"All kids are at risk."

These wise words should be embraced by anyone with any sense of parental or social responsibility. Whether the threat is Internet predators, gang influences, drug use, peer pressure, greed or simple boredom, the opportunities for today's youth to become criminally involved are enormous.

The statistics are undeniable: Youths who are involved in after-school activities are significantly less likely to engage in criminal activity.

Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager and a number of other top local law enforcement officials are involved with Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, a nationwide research and advocacy organization that helps communities form effective law enforcement partnerships with after-school programs.

In a recent meeting with The Bee's editorial board, Fladager shared her insight that government needs to be more efficient in its delivery of these programs. We believe that a variety of different governmental departments each offering its own program is not the most efficient use of tax dollars.

With each separate program having its own administration, management and budget, the layers of bureaucracy detract from the delivery of these programs to the very people we are trying to protect -- kids who might become involved in criminal activity.

Several area law enforcement agencies offer after-school programs. This is in addition to programs offered by the school districts, youth development agencies, and parks and recreation departments. We encourage law enforcement and the justice system to support after-school programs. The employees of these various agencies are leaders in our community who can serve as positive role models and mentors.

The more positive interaction youths have with law enforcement, the better. However, we encourage law enforcement to take only an active supporting role. The

management of child-development programs is best left to the experts in the school districts and parks and recreation departments.

Effective leadership and ethical use of our tax dollars demands that a critical evaluation be made of the current programs. Just because a program seems to have a positive image does not mean that it is effective in deterring youth- related crime. We believe that all after- school programs should undergo an ongoing outcome-based evaluation process. Programs that are found to be ineffective based on outcomes need to be modified or eliminated.

Conversely, programs that are identified as effective need to be expanded.

We encourage our community's leaders to cooperate with one another and develop a single, multifaceted program. Fight Crime: Invest in Kids has the research and advocacy expertise to lead the development of effective programs that would better serve youth, more effectively deter crime and more efficiently utilize our tax dollars.

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San Diego Union-Tribune 2 plus 2 equals less for schools, families 9.01.08

Maureen Magee

As costs keep rising, parents, districts adjust

A shiny red apple for the new teacher? Maybe not in this economy.

Many parents have already tightened their belts in the face of inflation and economic uncertainty. Now they are feeling the pinch of leaner school budgets that have been hurt by the rising costs of gas, food and utilities.

Add to that a proposed reduction in state funding, and it doesn't take a calculus student to recognize the math problem.

Fewer yellow buses will transport children. School cafeterias will charge more for lunch. Teachers will reuse textbooks. Art and music instruction and other specialized programs have been scaled back.

Most school districts in San Diego County avoided the mass teacher layoffs that had been threatened early in the state's budget talks. Many of the pink slips given to teachers and school employees in March – as required by law – were rescinded by May when proposed state funding increased.

However, California's budget is \$15.2 billion in the red and more than two months late.

School districts across the state have slashed their budgets, eliminating personnel and programs.

To cope, some San Diego County parents will pack brown bags filled with PB&J's to avoid higher cafeteria prices, and others have organized car pools to make up for eliminated bus routes.

Lori Yokum of Carmel Mountain had been counting on a bus to take her son to school. But Poway Unified, San Marcos Unified, Bonsall Union and the Oceanside Unified school districts all reduced or eliminated busing this year to save money.

The bus route Yokum's son would have used to get to middle school was cut. So she and her ex-husband have been scrambling to adjust their schedules to get their youngest child to and from his campus.

That means finding after-school activities to occupy him until they can pick him up. Sometimes, Yokum drives to campus and brings her son back to her office in Rancho Bernardo.

"He can do his homework here while I try to earn enough money to pay for the extra gas I used to pick him up," she said. "It would be more convenient and less stressful for all if he was able to hop on a bus, but we are doing our best to work it out."

Parents already paying more for their family's groceries also find themselves digging deeper for school lunches. Food prices are expected to continue to rise – by 5 percent to 6 percent this year – making it the largest annual increase since 1990, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In some districts, the cost for a month of school meals is now as much as \$55.

"We'll be packing our own lunches this year," said Angela Hall of El Cajon, whose 8-year-old daughter, Alyssa, ate in the cafeteria about half of the time last year.

Budget cuts by the Cajon Valley School District mean Alyssa's classroom will be more crowded this year, as class size is expected to go up. The East County district also postponed buying new language arts books this year. After the district laid off health aides, it trained office clerks in first aid.

San Diego Unified laid off 200 probationary teachers but managed to lower class size in some key grade levels, including early elementary grades at 30 schools and all freshmen English classes. The district hopes to rehire many of its teachers on temporary contracts – with benefits – if its aggressive plans to increase enrollment succeed, human resources chief Sam Wong said.

In the Vista Unified School District, students will get less art and music instruction this year. The district also cut counselors, library services and early-literacy instruction to balance its budget.

Oceanside Unified closed the Clair Burgener Academy for students not yet ready for high school. The academy's 100 students have been dispersed to other high schools and alternative schools.

The Escondido Union district, which started its academic year Aug. 25, cut hours at elementary-school libraries by half, with librarians now working two schools each. Superintendent Jennifer Walters said schools are coping by letting students check out more books at a time.

"I worry all the cuts will mean teachers are being stretched too thin," said Lisa Jason, who lives in San Diego's University City neighborhood. "If they cut too much, what is the quality of the education going to be like?"

With her twins starting kindergarten at Spreckels Elementary School tomorrow, Jason is both excited and concerned about their education.

"I plan on being as involved as possible," she said. "I'm optimistic. But I would consider private school if need be."

At public schools that get some additional support each year from nonprofit foundations run by students' parents, those private funds will be in greater demand this year.

Traditional school PTAs, which have been collectively losing members for the past six years, will work harder to recruit moms and dads this fall, representatives said.

"Given the budget cuts, it will be even more important for parents to be involved in schools," said Debbie Vincent, president of the Ninth District Parent Teacher Organization of San Diego and Imperial counties.

The Ninth District PTA membership stands at 84,000 members from 384 schools in both counties. Organizers want to increase membership to 100,000 by October, an ambitious goal given that some families on a tight budget may reject the minimum dues of \$15 a year.

However, PTA has no intention of increasing its fundraising efforts to make up for budget cuts, said Vincent, who has been advocating for more state education funding.

"We know a lot of things and programs that parents have been used to seeing at schools will be gone this year," said Vincent, who lives in Mira Mesa. "But it's not PTA's job to fill that void. If we start fundraising and paying for things, they will never be put back into the budget."

Article 11

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The Philadelphia Inquirer **Some school years go beyond state-required 180 days** **9.01.08**

Dan Hardy

By tradition, Labor Day marks the great divide between an 11-week summer vacation and the start of school for most students.

For a small but growing number of children in the Philadelphia area and around the country, however, it's just another three-day holiday weekend.

Students at the KIPP Philadelphia Charter School have been in class since Aug. 11. The school's 340 students, in grades five to eight, get 193 days of instruction, far more than the state-required 180 days. It also has a longer school day and students come in on Saturdays for extracurricular activities.

School CEO Marc Mannella said the added time was needed because many students were years behind academically when they enter fifth grade. "As far as I know, there's no pixie dust that I can sprinkle over a child's head to make up for years of wasted educational opportunity. It simply takes more time to catch them up," he said.

Students buy into the idea. "The long hours are so they can actually teach you and help you achieve your goals and do good in class," said fifth grader Alissa Smith. "They want to help us learn and help us get a better education so we can go to a good high school and college."

Others say all American students need more time in class to compete with students from other countries who often get more instructional time and score higher on standardized tests.

The United States ties at 28th out of 29 countries in the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development at 22.2 hours of instruction per week. South Korea ranks first at 30.2 hours.

"We believe that the extra time in school in other countries has had a significant impact" on their achievement, said Jennifer Davis, who heads the National Center on Time and Learning in Boston, which advocates more time in school.

Strong American Schools, an education reform group, advocates more school time to increase America's ability to compete in the global economy. Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, Japan, Poland, South Korea, and other nations have school days that are on average as much as 25 percent longer than in the United States, the group said.

Though the attention being paid to the issue is growing, the topic is not new: 25 years ago, the Nation at Risk study of American education called for seven hours of classroom instruction each day and 200 to 220 days in school.

In most schools, not much has changed. A recent survey by the National Center on Time and Learning had 28 states, including Pennsylvania and New Jersey, requiring 180 days of instruction, 12 with fewer days and only four - Hawaii, Kansas, Michigan and Ohio - with more. Six states set only total hours of instruction or leave it to school boards to decide.

Still, an increasing number of states, districts and charters have extended-time programs. In Massachusetts, 26 schools, most of them low-performing, will begin this year with students spending at least 30 percent more time in school. The state pays \$1,300 more per student.

That initiative inspired Massachusetts Sen. Ted Kennedy to introduce the Time for Innovation Matters in Education (TIME) Act in August; it calls for \$350 million in federal funding to set up similar programs.

In New Orleans, former Philadelphia schools CEO Paul Vallas extended the school day until 4:30 p.m. for the 12,500 students in the Recovery School District. He seeks to extend the school year by 20 days.

In Florida's Miami-Dade district, students in 39 struggling schools have an hour a day more in school and five more school days a year.

In Pittsburgh, eight low-achieving schools added 45 minutes to the school day and 10 days to the school year.

Charter schools around the country often feature longer school days and years. "There are no shortcuts for success. If we want our students' scores to grow

academically, we have to put in a lot more time and effort," said Jeremy Esposito, the head of Freedom Academy Charter in Camden, a KIPP school in session since Aug. 11.

In Pennsylvania, 254 districts reported an average school year of 181 days, up one day from four years ago. New Jersey does not keep student year statistics, but Department of Education spokesman Richard Vespucci said that most have 180-day schedules.

Pennsylvania and New Jersey require students to spend less than six hours per day in class: five hours and 53 minutes in New Jersey and five and a half hours a day in Pennsylvania.

Central Bucks Superintendent Robert Laws favors a shorter summer vacation and increasing the school calendar to around 200 days. His district now has 184. "If education is to be valued in this country, we should look at the calendar," Laws said. "I don't think it's an urban issue, and I don't think it's just for the low-achieving. If we compare ourselves with other countries, we've got fewer days."

The cost of extending school time works against change, because teachers unions say they want their members to be paid for more school time.

In Pennsylvania, 31 out of 501 districts have gotten state funding to expand school time, including Unionville Chadds Ford in Chester County and Jenkintown in Montgomery County. Jenkintown added 15 minutes to the school day, eliminated some half-days and plans to add two days, going from from 183 to 185, during the next two years.

"It's simple: Kids learn more when we have more time to teach them," said Tim Wade, superintendent.

Arlene Ackerman, Philadelphia's new superintendent, says lagging students in particular need more time. "We have to give them more time if they need more time," Ackerman said. She's put the issue on her wish list for teacher negotiations.

Unions say they are not opposed to longer days but caution that more time in school is not the only solution to low achievement. "Everyone wants to find one silver bullet to close the achievement gap. There isn't one," said James Testerman, head of the Pennsylvania State Education Association.

Nicholas Ignatuk, Ridley superintendent, says extending the school year is not possible without federal funding.

"If it means raising local taxes, it is not going to happen," he said.

Ignatuk said districts already extend the day and year with after-school tutoring and summer school. "The question is: do all students need it? If the vast majority of our seniors are graduating, getting good jobs and going on to good colleges, it may not be necessary for everybody."

Youth Today
Administrative management capacity in out-of-school time organizations:
An exploratory study
9.01.08

Nick Drymalski

At a time when successful programs are being encouraged to serve more and more youth, out-of-school time (OST) program providers need an influx of investment in their administrative management capacity to be able to support, develop and expand their programs, according to this report.

The authors write that front-line OST staff are often overly burdened with administrative duties due to organizational gaps, and that limitations in administrative staff, facilities and IT infrastructure may leave organizational leaders unable to plan in forward-looking and strategic ways. The study was based on interviews and site visits with 16 high-quality OST organizations in New York City and Chicago. Free, 76 pages. (212) 251-9700, <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/NR/rdonlyres/AF5707E0-9E7D-48AD-BDE6-20E6DD203012/0/AdministrativeManagementCapacity.pdf> .

Article 13

Chicago Tribune
Changes ring in school year
9.01.08

Carlos Sadovi

Renaissance 2010 continues to revamp curriculum, staffing

When Chicago Public Schools students head back to class Tuesday, thousands will walk into a record number of revamped schools while many others will see dozens of newly hired faces after the district replaced teachers and principals at eight struggling schools.

Along with new educational options at 34 schools this year, students will see curriculum changes stressing science, technology and writing.

And beginning this school year, 8th graders will have to pass a writing exam before they can go on to high school. The exam is patterned after state tests that students must take in their junior year of high school, CPS officials said .

"It's a big, big year," said CPS chief Arne Duncan. "We're trying to improve the quality of instruction at existing schools . . . and create a record number of new options in neighborhoods throughout the city."

The state's largest school district has 11 new charter schools, 10 more magnet schools and one new gifted school taking over buildings that previously housed schools that were either consolidated with others or shuttered as part of a controversial plan introduced in the spring to close schools because of low enrollment.

The only newly built schools are the Sir Miles Davis Magnet Academy at 6740 S. Paulina St. and the UNO Charter School's Archer Heights elementary and high school campus at 4248 W. 47th St.

Among the new schools in existing buildings is the Disney II Magnet at 3815 N. Kedvale Ave., which will open Tuesday at the former Irving Park Middle School.

The district replicated the Disney Magnet School, a high-performing school in Uptown that served as one of its first magnet schools. The school is part of the district's Renaissance 2010 initiative, which calls for 100 new schools to be created by 2010. The school was partially funded by Chicago-based Boeing Co., which helped develop two schools last year.

Bogdana Chkoumbova, Disney II's principal, recently was at the school as workers hammered, painted and put finishing touches in the dusty hallways as they struggled to get it ready for opening day.

She said they had more than 600 applications for 210 slots, with some parents waiting in line at 4 a.m. to apply. The school will begin with pre-kindergarten through 2nd-grade students, with the goal of adding a grade each year until they reach the 8th grade.

Chkoumbova, a former grade school teacher who worked at the original Disney for several years, teamed up with her former school principal and others to develop the new school's curriculum, which will focus on using arts and technology in core subjects such as math, science and reading.

The school will also offer expanded after-school activities and hold a monthly four-hour Saturday workshop so parents, teachers and students can work to enhance classroom learning.

"It's a very great opportunity for students to express their creativity and to provide opportunities for addressing different learning styles," she said.

That attracted Gerald Sims, whose daughter, Noel, 5, will be entering kindergarten at Disney II.

The South Shore resident said he and his wife are willing to drive more than 17 miles each way to drop off and pick up Noel each day because of the caliber of the education he expects his daughter to receive. He said the school's reputation helped him pick it over several other magnet schools.

"I always wanted to give her the best opportunity, and Disney I does have the reputation of being a great school," Sims said. "I was attracted by the name and what they offered to students. She's very artsy and interested in different things."

But other parents are not as happy as Sims. The district fired most of the staff at Harper High School on the South Side and three small academies at Orr High School on the West Side. The staffs at Fulton and Copernicus Elementary Schools, which feed Harper, and Howe Elementary School and Morton Career Academy, which feed Orr, also were replaced.

The aim was to "turn around" the struggling high schools and their feeders, and experts have applauded the school systems' efforts. Duncan said the schools' struggling test scores made it imperative to change the schools.

Linda Rivera, however, is worried about what her son Malachi, 6, will face when he begins 1st grade at Howe. Although she understands the need for change, she does not necessarily know what that will mean for her son's education.

Already she has had to get him a new uniform and was told in a letter over the summer that the school day will be an hour longer than it was in the past.

"I'm going to be a little worried. I don't know who these new teachers are and how the school system will be," Rivera said. "I would like to hope for the best."

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Chicago Tribune

Chicago public school students skip class in show of activism

9.02.08

Carlos Sadovi, Tara Malone and Lisa Black

Sporting book bags and name tags, nearly 1,000 Chicago students on Tuesday got a tutorial in civic action aimed at spotlighting the disparities in Illinois public education as they missed the first day of city classes and instead attempted to register at two North Shore schools where educators and residents welcomed them.

The civics lesson continues Wednesday as some students again will miss school as part of a teach-in protest in the lobbies of more than a dozen Chicago businesses and agencies.

Critics charged that the symbolic, well-orchestrated protest shortchanged students of a day's education and Chicago Public Schools of more than \$100,000 in potential reimbursement from the state. Mayor Richard Daley on Tuesday described the boycott as "very selfish." Gov. Rod Blagojevich said students "should not be used as political pawns."

The boycott's architect, state Sen. James Meeks (D-Chicago), defended his tactics. Standing outside New Trier Township High School's Northfield campus, Meeks urged Blagojevich and legislative leaders to call an emergency session to address how Illinois funds public schools.

"If they can call an emergency session for capital projects, they can call an emergency session to deal with education. This is human capital," Meeks said. "This is a 30-year problem, the system of funding education."

Blagojevich said he will not meet with Meeks during the boycott, spokesman Lucio Guerrero said. He also affirmed the governor's opposition to raising income taxes as part of a funding solution.

Chicago students will again board buses Wednesday, traveling to 18 Chicago offices, including the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, City Hall, Boeing Corp. and Aon Insurance, according to Meeks' spokeswoman. Forty educators will deliver four hours of daily instruction during the boycott, which is expected to last through Friday.

The protest appears unlikely to spur lawmakers to address funding disparities among schools, an issue that has stymied them for decades. Still, the unprecedented influx of mostly black students from Chicago to the predominantly white, affluent New Trier

highlighted the long-simmering school funding topic, many said.

"The reality is it's not going to happen today. Sometimes small numbers have to make a lot of noise, and I appreciate that," said New Trier parent Megan Davy of Kenilworth. "This is civil disobedience at its finest."

Thirty buses collected students, parents and religious leaders from eight city churches for the trip north, including the Salem Baptist Church where Meeks serves as pastor.

Meeks supporter Dalene Harris attempted to teach the 21 children aboard one bus about the history of civil rights. Harris and Rev. Jason Reynolds asked students if they knew what a protest meant. Some students shouted "to stand up for your rights."

Reynolds replied: "To protest means to stand up for your rights, but it also means not to take what someone is giving you."

Cousins Jasmine Williams, 12, and Daja Williams, 10, stared through the school bus windows as they rolled past New Trier's 9th grade campus in Northfield. The girls quietly viewed the waving parents and welcome sign prepared by high school art students. The excitement almost outweighed the disappointment about not returning to classes, Daja said. She'd picked out a new backpack.

"I'm a little sad for not going to school on the first day," Daja said.

Administrators opened the Northfield campus for registration, and school officials said they received 800 applications for elementary school and 150 for high school, though Meeks claimed the tally was higher. More than 100 teachers and administrators greeted visiting students with handshakes, snacks and water on the hot day.

State law requires proof of residency to register in a public school. Suburban school officials said this will be no exception, and they will notify families in writing about whether they qualify to attend the North Shore schools.

Classes took place as scheduled at Sunset Ridge elementary and New Trier, an academic powerhouse where 99 percent of students graduated last year and 98 percent enrolled in college.

At issue is how much money schools spend per student. In a funding system fueled largely by local property taxes, New Trier Township spent nearly \$17,000 per student in 2005-06 and Sunset Ridge spent about \$16,000, while Chicago Public Schools spent an estimated \$10,400 per pupil.

State funding, in part, is predicated on a school district's highest three months of enrollment. September tends to be one of the best, said Chicago schools spokesman Michael Vaughn. He estimates the city school system could lose \$110 for every day a student is absent during the month.

School officials who disputed the boycott and ministers who endorsed it agreed on one point.

"The shame of Illinois is we have left whole districts behind, not only in Chicago but in rural districts as well," said Rev. Marshall Hatch of Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church.

Such financial and academic divides fueled discussion in New Trier teacher Peter Tragos' history class.

"This is a protest against the system, not necessarily New Trier, and we tried to make that clear to students," Tragos said.

Nearly a dozen New Trier students attended the afternoon rally in Harms Woods forest preserve, where Meeks and other ministers thanked suburban officials and urged parents to participate in day two of the boycott. "Does it help for us to come here?" Ada Sochanska, 16, a New Trier junior, asked the city students.

"Yes, it helps a lot," one young man said. "It shows someone cares."

Tribune reporters Monique Garcia and Dan Mihalopoulos contributed to this report

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Campaign K-12 (Blog)
Convention ad warns 'One Nation Left Behind'
9.02.08

Mark Walsh (Op Ed)

Strong American Schools, the group behind the ED in '08 campaign to boost debate about education in the presidential campaign, has a full-page ad in this morning's St. Paul Pioneer Press that bluntly says, "Our schools are failing."

The ad, in the newspaper's special news section on the Republican National Convention, displays a ranking of national flags showing the United States as 21st in the world in science. (The fine print cites several assessments, including two from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.)

"The countries with the best schools attract the best jobs," the ad says. "If jobs move to countries like Finland and South Korea, your child's opportunities dry up. And so does our economy."

The ad calls for rigorous national standards, performance pay for teachers, and more learning time and support for students.

"Wake up the school board in your town and the politicians in Washington," it says.

Strong American Schools chief Roy Romer, a former Democratic governor of Colorado, is scheduled to take part in an education forum for convention participants on Tuesday. Romer and Strong American Schools also participated in the Democratic National Convention last week in Denver.

Meanwhile, also in today's Pioneer Press, University of Minnesota education policy expert Joe Nathan has this opinion essay, headlined: "Minnesota schools rank high, but are challenged by myth and complacency."

I spoke to Nathan for my Education Week story about the education landscape here in Minnesota.

--Mark Walsh

Campaign K-12 (Blog)
Spellings glad NCLB reauthorization didn't happen
9.02.08

Alyson Klein (Op Ed)

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings is glad that the No Child Left Behind Act wasn't reauthorized as scheduled last year, because "where we were headed would have been a bad reauthorization," she told Education Week today.

Her comments, in an interview on the opening day of the scaled-back Republican National Convention, were an apparent reference to a draft bill crafted by Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., the chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee. That measure would have permitted some states to use local assessments in their accountability systems, among other changes that were largely criticized by supporters of the current NCLB law as an effort to weaken accountability.

Secretary Spellings said over coffee that the additional time to craft a renewal of the school improvement law will help give the coalition that came together to pass NCLB a chance to regroup and continue to build support for the law's central principle of accountability.

Ms. Spellings agreed that education has taken a back seat to other issues, such as the economy and energy, in the presidential campaign. But she sees the lack of discussion of the No Child Left Behind Act on the floor of the Democratic National Convention in Denver as a positive development.

"I usually operate in the no-news-is-good-news realm," she said. When asked why Sen. Barack Obama's criticism of the law on the campaign trail frequently met with enthusiastic applause, she said, "It's not a secret that lots of interests groups have spent millions tarnishing the [NCLB] brand."

Unsurprisingly, Secretary Spellings said she thought that Sen. John McCain of Arizona, the soon-to-be-official Republican nominee, would make a better education president than Sen. Obama, who officially became the Democratic nominee last week.

"I do not think he's going to be worried about the teachers' unions and the equities of grown-ups," she said of Mr. McCain. "NCLB was a necessary first step, and I think he recognizes that."

She said it's her impression that Sen. McCain, like President Bush, is "a different kind of Republican" on education issues, as opposed to some GOP conservatives who have sought to significantly scale back the federal role in education by allowing states to opt out of NCLB's accountability requirements.

But she also had kind words for the Democratic nominee. She said Sen. Obama "seems to understand the civil rights community and their equities," as shown by many leaders who favor strong accountability for schools, "versus the unions and their equities." She added: "I think it was bold for him to speak out on merit pay. Let's see it happen."

Hurricane Gustav has prompted a major shake-up of the GOP convention schedule here. But Secretary Spellings appeared to be going about her schedule as planned, although she said she had been in touch with Paul G. Pastorek, the Louisiana schools chief, to see if he needed any help. "Of course, we're prepared to do what's needed," she said.

When Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit the Gulf Coast three years ago, the U.S. Department of Education helped ensure that students from New Orleans and other affected areas were able to temporarily enroll in other school districts.

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Chicago Sun-Times **New CPS school offers high-tech education** **9.02.08**

Rosalind Rossi

'ON THE FOREFRONT' | New CPS school has youths do work on laptops, adding new dimension to learning environment

Freshmen won't need book bags filled with textbooks or even pencils and pens when they walk into the new Chicago public high school opening today in the old Austin High building.

Instead, they will be entering a mostly textbook-free world at Virtual Opportunities Inside a School Environment, one of 26 new or revitalized CPS schools to open today.

At VOISE, students will be flipping open personal laptops, not textbooks, to not only read -- but watch and hear -- online lessons packed with animation, video and quizzes.

Forget the spiral notebooks. Kids will be taking notes on laptops -- just as many college students do. They'll also get home computers, so they and their parents can e-mail teachers questions or check on student grades, homework and attendance 24/7.

"I'm going to be nervous, but I'm going to get used to it," said VOISE freshman Ashley Guilty, 14, who doesn't have a home computer now.

"They will be preparing us for the future," Ashley said. "When it comes time for me to walk across the graduation stage, I'll know a lot about technology."

VOISE is one of three small high schools housed at 231 N. Pine. But as the only school in the state to mix daily lessons by teachers with an all-digital curriculum, VOISE offers the best of both worlds, said Principal Todd Yarsh.

Teachers will introduce new material, then support kids as they advance through online units at their own pace. Those who need more time can take it. Struggling readers can slap on headphones and simultaneously listen to their lessons as they read them.

Kids who digest material quickly can advance to the next unit, or dig deeper into a topic in the current unit that interests them.

"This model allows you to not let the learning stop at a book," Yarsh said. "There's no end to their learning."

Students will still read novels in English class, and textbooks will be around for reference in classrooms, but most work will be online -- including all written papers.

Kids who may be shy about raising their hands in class can discuss their studies at online message boards and blog sites.

"You could have a classroom of students that could be dead silent, but they could be having a hugely rich conversation just by messaging on a site," Yarsh said.

The textbook-less curriculum is produced by Seattle-based Apex Learning, which has provided online Advanced Placement courses for years to kids whose pass rates on AP tests mirror the nation's.

The VOISE curriculum is "more than a textbook; it's a complete course of study," but one designed to be led by a teacher, said Apex Learning CEO Cheryl Vedoe.

Today, many kids weaned on computers and fast-paced videos "tune out" in a traditional classroom, Vedoe said.

"When they are given instruction in a format that is more like their lives, they see it as relevant," Vedoe said. "We're on the forefront of something that's very powerful."

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The Canadian Press

New games for young children focus on teaching manners, social skills

9.03.08

The Canadian Press Staff

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Trouble ensues for Curtis, a bright-eyed tot with a bandana and pirate's hat, when Pushy Pete elbows him at the amusement park and knocks his tokens down the drain.

He's helped by generous friends in one of a series of new games developed by toymaker Hasbro aimed at helping preschool-age children improve their social skills.

The three games focus on a different lesson - sharing, listening and good manners - and are each accompanied by a book and CD. They take place at either a pizza parlour, amusement park or picnic and follow a group of kids in the fictional town of Noodleboro as they navigate sticky social situations that teach them proper behaviour.

The concept for the games emerged from Hasbro market research indicating that parents of preschoolers tend to prioritize imparting basic social, rather than academic, skills to their young children.

"At the end of the day, while we feel responsible to teach the ABCs and all those things and have our kids get ready for school, when it comes to a lot of the social skills, we like to say that the buck stops here," said Jill Hambley, vice-president of marketing at Pawtucket-based Hasbro, the world's second biggest toy company.

Hasbro plans to release more Noodleboro games next year, Hambley said.

Some other social skill games have emerged on the market too, joining a broader class of educational games - such as the LeapFrog and VTech products - that have grown in popularity in recent years.

The Caring Corners Mrs. Goodbye Talking Dollhouse from Learning Curve, for instance, is an interactive toy that teaches kids about sharing and responsibility. Toys to Grow On, an online toy store, offers a set of six colourful "board books" with sayings like: "Germs are not for Sharing" and "Feet are not for Kicking."

"We joke going back about 15 years ago, education was a taboo word in the toy business," said Jim Silver, editor-in-chief of Toys and Family Entertainment Magazine, a trade publication. "These things that were taboo are now important to parents."

The Noodleboro games are similar in some ways to traditional children's games, except players are rewarded not for a particular dice roll but rather for listening carefully, sharing tokens with friends and saying "please" and "thank you."

The pizza parlour game, for instance, asks a child to fill a parent or adult's order by listening for the requested toppings and then placing the corresponding cards on a cardboard pie.

Some parents are dubious.

Amber Cumbee, 23, an employee at the Wise Owl toy store in Westerly and mother of a three-year-old girl, Zoe, said listening and sharing are good lessons but thinks it's "goofy" and unnecessary to have a game dedicated to manners.

"If she's not grasping it by that time, saying please and thank you, I don't think a game would really do it for her," she said, although she had not seen the games.

The Noodleboro CDs include a sing-along theme song with lyrics like, "We say 'thank you' and we say 'please.' I think of you and you think of me" as well as songs about the virtues of sharing, listening and manners.

Marilyn Skinner, director of the Center for Early Childhood Education at Indiana University-Kokomo, said that although she also had not seen the games, she thought they could be useful provided an adult played them alongside a child to reinforce the social skills lessons.

"One of the things that we find is that through social skills being developed, you're also developing communication and language and the understanding of words," Skinner said.

Chicago Tribune
Meeks' school-funding protest moves from North Shore to Chicago corporations
9.03.08

Carlos Sadovi, Tara Malone and Lisa Black

The civics lesson for hundreds of Chicago Public Schools students who skipped the first day of classes to protest Illinois education funding shifts Wednesday from the North Shore to corporate America.

The Rev. James Meeks, a state senator organizing the boycott, is scheduled to send buses of students to the lobbies of more than a dozen downtown Chicago businesses as part of a teach-in.

Some of the same students who traveled to New Trier High School's Northfield campus on Tuesday are expected to sit in the lobbies of buildings including the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, City Hall, Boeing Corp. and Aon Insurance, a Meeks spokeswoman said. Forty educators will deliver four hours of daily instruction during the boycott that's expected to last through Friday.

The anticipated teach-in comes a day after nearly 1,000 Chicago students sporting book bags and name tags got a tutorial in civic action aimed at spotlighting the disparities in Illinois public education. They missed the first day of city classes and instead attempted to register at two North Shore schools where educators and residents welcomed them.

Critics charged the symbolic, well-orchestrated protest shortchanged students of a day's education and Chicago Public Schools of more than \$100,000 in potential reimbursement from the state. Mayor Richard Daley on Tuesday described the boycott as "very selfish." Gov. Rod Blagojevich said students "should not be used as political pawns."

Meeks (D-Chicago), defended his tactics. Standing outside New Trier, Meeks urged Blagojevich and legislative leaders to call an emergency session to address how Illinois funds public schools.

"If they can call an emergency session for capital projects, they can call an emergency session to deal with education. This is human capital," Meeks said. "This is a 30-year problem, the system of funding education."

Blagojevich said he will not meet with Meeks during the boycott, spokesman Lucio Guerrero said. He also affirmed the governor's opposition to raising income taxes as part of a funding solution.

The protest appears unlikely to spur lawmakers to address funding disparities between schools, an issue that has stymied them for decades. Still, the unprecedented influx of mostly black students from Chicago to the predominantly white, affluent New Trier highlighted the long-simmering school funding topic, many said.

"The reality is it's not going to happen today. Sometimes small numbers have to make a lot of noise, and I appreciate that," said New Trier parent Megan Davy of

Kenilworth. "This is civil disobedience at its finest."

Thirty buses collected students, parents and religious leaders from eight city churches for the trip north, including the Salem Baptist Church where Meeks serves as pastor.

Meeks supporter Dalene Harris tried to teach the 21 children aboard one bus Tuesday about the history of civil rights. Harris and Rev. Jason Reynolds asked students if they knew what a protest meant. Some students shouted, "to stand up for your rights."

Reynolds replied: "To protest means to stand up for your rights, but it also means not to take what someone is giving you."

Cousins Jasmine Williams, 12, and Daja Williams, 10, stared through the school bus windows as they rolled past the New Trier's 9th-grade campus in Northfield. The girls quietly took in the waving parents and welcome sign prepared by high school art students. The excitement almost outweighed the disappointment about not returning to classes, Daja said. She'd picked out a new backpack.

"I'm a little sad for not going to school on the first day," Daja said.

Administrators opened the Northfield campus for registration and school officials said they received 800 applications for Sunset Ridge School and 150 for high school, though Meeks claimed the tally was higher. More than 100 teachers and administrators greeted visiting students with hand shakes, snacks and water on the warm day.

State law requires proof of residency to register in a public school. Suburban school officials said this will be no exception, and they will notify families in writing about whether they qualify to attend the North Shore schools.

Classes took place as scheduled at Sunset Ridge and New Trier, an academic powerhouse where 99 percent of students graduated last year and 98 percent enrolled in college.

At issue is how much money schools spend per student. In a funding system largely fueled by local property taxes, New Trier Township spent nearly \$17,000 per student in 2005-06 and Sunset Ridge spent about \$16,000, while Chicago Public Schools spent an estimated \$10,400 per student.

State funding, in part, is predicated on a school district's highest three months of enrollment. September tends to be one of the best, said Chicago Public Schools spokesman Michael Vaughn. He estimates the city school system could lose \$110 for every day a student is absent during the month.

School officials who disputed the boycott and ministers who endorsed it agreed on one point.

"The shame of Illinois is we have left whole districts behind, not only in Chicago but in rural districts as well," said Rev. Marshall Hatch of Mt. Pilgrim Baptist Church.

Such financial and academic divides fueled discussion in New Trier teacher Peter Tragos' history class.

"This is a protest against the system, not necessarily New Trier, and we tried to make that clear to students," Tragos said.

Nearly a dozen New Trier students attended the afternoon rally in Harms Woods Forest Preserve, where Meeks and other ministers thanked suburban officials and urged parents to participate in day two of the boycott.

"Does it help for us to come here?" Ada Sochanska, 16, a New Trier junior, asked the city students.

"Yes, it helps a lot," one young man said. "It shows someone cares."

Tribune reporters Monique Garcia and Dan Mihalopoulos contributed to this report.

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USA Today

Democrats, teachers unions now divided on many issues
9.03.08

Greg Toppo

A funny thing happened to the Democratic Party on the way to an education platform: The party has visibly split with teachers unions, its longtime allies, on key issues.

The ink is barely dry on the official document, which outlines the party's guiding principles, but it shows that in this fall's general election, Democrats will stake out a few positions that unions have long opposed.

Among them: paying teachers more if they raise test scores, teach in "underserved areas" or take on new responsibilities such as mentoring new teachers.

Randi Weingarten, the American Federation of Teachers' new president, says she's willing to entertain merit-pay plans. But most union leaders, as well as rank-and-file members, have long resisted, saying teachers would compete for jobs rather than cooperate and share ideas.

Sen. Barack Obama, who supports the "merit pay" idea, earned loud boos last July when he raised the topic of "performance pay" in a speech to the National Education Association (NEA).

"If there's ever going to be a time for change, this is going to be it," says Joe Williams, who heads Democrats for Education Reform, a centrist group with ties to the Obama campaign. He says the new platform has a greater emphasis on educational equity for poor and urban students. "We feel like this is a conversation that Democrats should be in on."

At a series of standing-room-only forums in Denver last week in conjunction with the Democratic National Convention, several urban mayors and educators said union contracts limit their ability to fire bad teachers and move good ones to needy schools. "We have to understand that as Democrats we have been wrong on education, and it's time to get it right," said Newark Mayor Cory Booker. He said unions have pressured him to reject charter schools, vouchers and other ways to broaden urban students' access to better schools.

"Ten years ago, when I started talking about school choice, I was tarred and feathered," he told the crowd. "I literally was brought into a room by one of the union officers. ... He threatened me that I would never win in office if I kept talking about school choice and kept talking about charter schools."

John Wilson, executive director of the NEA, says blaming teacher contracts is "naïve" and not particularly visionary. He points out that school systems in Finland and Singapore, two of the world's best, are heavily unionized.

But Adrian Fenty, the Democratic mayor of Washington, D.C., said "insane work rules" are turning many reformers against unions. Noting the 500-person crowd at the event, he said: "The local politics is changing fast. If we'd had this meeting four years ago, there would only have been five people here."

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Minneapolis Star Tribune **Pawlenty: Education key to U.S. standing** **9.03.08**

Emily Johns

Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty received a standing ovation from a largely Republican crowd on Tuesday morning after a speech about education in the United States and what needs to be done to regain America's standing as an education leader in the world.

Pawlenty, who said that government needs to work together with teachers' unions to accelerate changes, spoke at a discussion at the Minneapolis Marriott with former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, former Democratic presidential candidate the Rev. Al Sharpton and others.

"In a place like Minnesota, we're not going to be able to leapfrog [unions] very effectively," Pawlenty said at the "Time to Choose -- Children or the Bureaucracy" discussion organized by American Solutions for Winning the Future, a 527 group started by Gingrich. Several hundred people, primarily Republican delegates and party operatives, attended.

The so-called 527 groups get their name from the IRS code under which the tax-exempt organizations are authorized.

Pawlenty told the crowd that the number one thing the country can do, besides having parents invested in their children's education, is have quality, dedicated teachers and "rigorous and relevant" professional development for them.

He also touted his "Q Comp" program, which sets up a merit-pay system for teachers in participating districts, while focusing on professional development.

For reform, he said, "we can't wait another 30 years. The pace is too slow."

Pawlenty also said that Minnesota's highest-in-the-nation ACT scores and other high national test results only tell "half the picture," because those rankings compare the state with other states and not with the rest of the world.

Atlanta Journal-Constitution
A more personal approach to learning
9.03.08

Laura Diamond

Students in the fine arts program at Maynard Jackson High School recently pointed their toes and delicately bent their arms to copy the ballet moves demonstrated by their teacher.

Down another wing at the south Atlanta school, rooms full of students learned about information technology, which covers everything from Web page design to computer operating systems to developing software. Students who succeed here can earn college credit or certification that allows them to start working.

In a third area of the school, students take engineering classes and other advanced lessons through an early college program. Students here can graduate with a high school diploma and an associate's degree from Atlanta Metropolitan College.

This year, Jackson High became the fourth high school in Atlanta City Schools to transform into smaller learning environments. The campus, formerly called Southside High, was renamed to commemorate the city's first black mayor. A ceremony marking the name change takes place Thursday.

"We're not the big, cold, impersonal high school parents remember from when they were teenagers," principal Shirlene Carter said. "We're personalized and nurturing. We're giving our students interesting and challenging programs."

Converted high schools contain different academic themes, similar to a university with distinct colleges. Jackson High offers three --- information technology, engineering early college, and fine arts/media communications. Students pick an academy and spend their time with teachers and classmates in those areas. Each academy has its own math, English, science and social studies teachers, in addition to instructors tied to the academic theme.

Superintendent Beverly Hall hopes to reverse the system's high percentage of dropouts and low graduation rate by providing students with personal and challenging experiences found in smaller high schools.

The themes serve as hooks to get Jackson High's nearly 1,000 students interested so they attend every day.

"There's no drama or anything because you get why you're learning what the teachers are teaching and you feel like you're getting some real skills instead of just memorizing what seems like useless stuff," said Antavious Earls, a junior enrolled in the information technology academy.

Atlanta's high school transformation began in 2005 and should be complete by the 2011-12 school year.

District officials have said it would cost about \$60 million for all nine high schools to change. The money is coming from public and private grants, including \$10.5 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Atlanta Education Fund also solicits

money from area philanthropists and other interested groups.

Carter said the school still is working out kinks. One issue is when students enrolled in one academy want to take college-level Advanced Placement courses offered in another, she said.

Sophomore Jacqueline Chapman wasn't aware of any problems the school needed to fix. She was too busy sculpting clay as a student in the fine arts academy.

"I don't know why they didn't make these changes sooner," she said. "Doesn't it make sense that we'll do better in school if we actually like what we're doing?"

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Campaign K-12 (Ed Week Blog) **GOP Education platform echoes McCain's Agenda** **9.03.08**

Alyson Klein (Op Ed)

OP/Ed: Alyson Klein – Alyson Klein, who reports on federal education policy, joined the staff of Education Week in February 2006 after nearly two years at Congress Daily.

Now that the GOP convention is underway, the Republican party has given its official stamp of approval to an education platform that mirrors many of the K-12 proposals of Sen. John McCain of Arizona, the nearly nominee.

The platform calls for merit pay for teachers, and for permitting principals to recruit the best educators "without regard to collective bargaining agreements." And it supports school choice options, including expanding charter schools and giving families access to private school vouchers that can be used at both secular and religious schools. It commends efforts by local school districts to recruit professionals from higher education, business, and the military to serve as adjunct instructors, if they are needed.

McCain has advocated a top-to-bottom review of all federal programs and the platform repeats this call, saying that policymakers must examine all programs at the U.S. Department of Education to make sure they are effective. It says that K-12 spending at the Department of Education has "shot up almost 41 percent to \$25 billion" in less than a decade even though "the constitution assigns the federal government no role in education." And, in a nod to small government conservatives, it says that the federal government must "respect the role of states" and "better meet state needs."

McCain didn't mention the No Child Left Behind Act in his speech when he laid out his education proposals to the annual meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Cincinnati in July. And the GOP platform is just as vague about the federal school improvement law—the education portion also doesn't mention the measure by name. Instead, it calls for "accountability for student achievement; periodic testing on the fundamentals of learning especially math and reading, history and geography; transparency, so parents and the federal government know which school best serve their students."

That language isn't inconsistent with NCLB, but it definitely opens the door to changes in the law, which calls for testing in reading and math in grades 3-8 and once in high school.

The platform also takes traditionally conservative views on issues that McCain hasn't mentioned much on the campaign trail. It supports "English First" instruction, apparently as opposed to bilingual education. And it says that the party will "energetically assert the right of students to engage in voluntary prayer in schools." The document also calls for replacing "family planning" programs for teenagers with increased funding for abstinence education.

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Campaign K-12 (Ed Week Blog)

Gingrich calls for 'Tripartisanship' to improve schools

9.03.08

Alyson Klein (Op Ed)

OP/Ed: Alyson Klein, who reports on federal education policy, joined the staff of Education Week in February 2006 after nearly two years at Congress Daily.

President Bush isn't the only Republican who believes in high academic standards and aggressive accountability won't end when President Bush leaves office. That's the message that came across at today's event put on by American Solutions for Winning the Future, a nonprofit organization started by Newt Gingrich, the former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. The Education Equality Project and ED in 08 were among the co-sponsors of the event.

Gingrich's group used the issue of global competitiveness to galvanize support for policies, including alternative pay for teachers and rigorous curricula benchmarked against international standards. For education redesign efforts to succeed, they will have to be championed by Republicans, Democrats, and Independents, Gingrich said.

"If you're going to get this to scale, it's going to have to be a tripartisan effort," Gingrich said. "What we're going to have here today is some people you've probably traditionally thought of as Democrats and some you've probably thought of as Republicans."

Gingrich especially seemed to get a kick out of sharing a stage with the Rev. Al Sharpton, the co-chairman of the Education Equality Project and a 2004 Democratic presidential candidate. Gingrich made sure that the two posed for a photo with the other panelists, including Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings; top McCain education adviser Lisa Graham Keegan; and ED in '08's Roy Romer.

"Most of you didn't come here so that you could go home and tell your friends how much Al Sharpton impressed you," Gingrich joked. Sharpton and other members of the Education Equality Project had of unions at last week's Democratic National Convention.

Sharpton's speech garnered loud applause from the largely Republican crowd, particularly when he emphasized parental responsibility and took teachers' unions to task for what he perceived as their failure to embrace accountability.

"You cannot say schools must be improved but that we cannot judge the performance of teachers," he said. "We cannot have any sacred cows in the room when our children are behind in math and science."

In his speech, ED in '08's Roy Romer subtly urged the more conservative wing of the Republican party to embrace the idea that, early in the next administration state school chiefs, governors, and the new administration should sit down together to craft high standards. He said that presidential candidates are often afraid of talking about education policy because they're worried about offending proponents of local control.

And Gov. Tim Pawlenty, who until was last week was widely speculated to be McCain's veep pick, talked about his own record on education redesign, particularly the need for merit pay, something he has championed in Minnesota.

In her speech, Secretary Spellings said that advocates for federal accountability need to do a better job selling their proposals, particularly to suburban voters.

"We haven't fully made our case to the American people," she said, adding that some voters have criticized the law for taking resources away from one school's "gifted flute program" and steering it towards inner city schools. "People don't get what's at stake for this country."

Part of the problem, she said, is educational policy lingo. When officials used terms such as adequate yearly progress and international benchmarking, "parents don't know what we're talking about," she said.

Keegan, who moderated the panel, didn't give a speech. But she did emphasize McCain's and her own support for accountability. "I'm proud to be working for [someone] who backs NCLB and its accountability requirements," she said. Which sounded pretty Spellings-esque, at least to me.

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Education Week Out-of-school science 9.03.08

Ed Week Staff

Brief summary: "Toward a Systematic Evidence Base for Science in Out-of-School Time: The Role of Assessment," a new study commissioned by the Noyce Foundation, makes recommendations for policymakers and education leaders on ways to judge the effectiveness of informal and afterschool science programs. The study calls for specific criteria to be created to judge these programs in areas such as student engagement, acquisition of science knowledge and reasoning skills.

Education Week is a paid subscription publication. Please visit www.edweek.org to access the article.