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mercury.its.state.ms.us (Netscape Messaging Server 4.15) with
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Mar 2001 09:29:25 -0600
Received: from listsrv2nts1.listserv2.westat.com (listserv2.westat.com [198.232.249.2
2])
by mx1.its.state.ms.us (8.10.0/8.10.0) with ESMTP id f2NFSZX19257
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Received: from [198.232.249.22] by listsrv2nts1.listserv2.westat.com (NTList 5.05.000
2/NU7713.00.329881fa) with ESMTP id rkgdbaaa for drcrept1@listserv2.westat.com; Fri,
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Received: from 198.232.249.95 by listsrv2nts1.westat.com (InterScan E-Mail VirusWall
NT); Fri, 23 Mar 2001 09:55:41 -0500 (Eastern Standard Time)
Received: from smtp.westat.com (smtp1.westat.com) by smtp.westat.com (LSMTP for Windo
ws NT v1.1b) with SMTP id <0.0009F3EA@smtp.westat.com>; Fri, 23 Mar 2001 10:00:39 -05
00
Received: from 10.1.0.184 by smtp.westat.com (InterScan E-Mail VirusWall NT); Fri, 23
Mar 2001 10:00:38 -0500 (Eastern Standard Time)
Received: by reconnt1.westat.com with Internet Mail Service (5.5.2653.19)
id <HP98A48X>; Fri, 23 Mar 2001 09:55:51 -0500
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From: Negpweek <NEGPWEEK@WESTAT.com>
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'drcrept2@listserv2.westat.com'" <drcrept2@listserv2.westat.com>,
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Subject: The NEGP WEEKLY for March 22, 2001
Date: Fri, 23 Mar 2001 09:55:54 -0500
MIME-Version: 1.0
X-Mailer: Internet Mail Service (5.5.2653.19)
Content-Type: text/plain;
charset="iso-8859-1"
X-ListVersion: 5
X-ListMember: governor@govoff.state.ms.us [drcrept1@listserv2.westat.com]

*****THE NEGP WEEKLY*****
A weekly news update on America's Education Goals
and school improvement efforts across America from the
NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS PANEL

Thursday - March 22, 2001 -- Vol. 2 -- No. 94

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FACT OF THE WEEK

Check out the NEGP's latest infograph on School Violence at <http://www.negp.gov>, which shows that the percentage of 10th graders reporting that they were threatened or injured at school in the previous year was reduced from 40% to 33% between 1991 and 1998.

STATE POLICY NEWS

1.) ***** TESTING: A COSTLY ENDEAVOR
(Goal Three: Student Achievement)

States collectively spend more than \$400 million a year to test students in far fewer grades than called for in President Bush's education plan, according to a survey of state education leaders conducted by Stateline.org. The president intends for every state to test students in grades three through eight, or risk losing some federal funding.

Stateline.org interviewed all 50 state education departments to discover how much each state spends in developing, issuing and scoring K-12 tests. According to the survey, state spending ranged from nothing in Iowa, where there is no statewide testing program, to \$44 million in California.

Only fifteen states, including California, already require student testing in reading and math from grades three to eight.

For more information, visit <http://www.stateline.org> and click on education.

2.) ***** DIGITAL SCHOOLS: PENNSYLVANIA'S WINNERS
(Goal Three: Student Achievement and Goal Six: Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning)

Three Pennsylvania schools won the state's digital school competition. Governor Tom Ridge announced the winners last month, and said these districts will "help us invent the future of education in Pennsylvania." State education officials hope these districts will serve as national models for integrating technology into all aspects of learning.

The districts are:

> Spring Clove School District - plans are underway to create the Clove Community Educational Center, a comprehensive resource center where students and community members will be able to access on-line course and other technological opportunities.

> Quaker Valley School District - each student in grades 3 through 12 will receive a "QvePack," containing a wireless network notebook computer and an "eBook."

> Carlisle Area School District - will deliver educational services to every family in the district through its Web Portal, including 24-hour tutoring.

For more information, visit Pennsylvania Education Network at <http://www.l2l.org>.

COMMUNITY AND LOCAL NEWS

3.) ***** HIGH SCHOOL IN COLLEGE: A GROWING ALTERNATIVE
(Goal Two: School Completion, Goal Three: Student Achievement and Goal Six:
Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning)

EDUCATION WEEK offers a retrospective on high schools located on college campuses (Gehring, 3/14). The alternative to traditional high schools emerged in 1974 on the campus of LaGuardia Community College, Long Island. At that time, the approach was radical. From the paper: "In an education world where turf was sacred and the divide between public secondary schools and ivory-tower postsecondary institutions had been bridged only rarely and often with deep reservations, change was not easily embraced."

Since then, the concept of middle colleges has blossomed. Advocates point to the seamlessness created between K-12 and postsecondary education through the middle colleges.

The article features several middle colleges in operation today: From South West Tennessee Community College in Memphis to the Middle College High School on the campus of Contra Costa College in San Pablo, California.

For more information, visit the Middle College Consortium at <http://www.mcconsortium.org>.

4.) ***** K-8 SCHOOLS: THE BENEFITS
(Goal Three: Student Achievement and Goal Seven: Safe Schools)

Several urban districts are "bucking a decades-long effort" to establish middle schools and, instead, opening K-8 schools in an attempt to boost academic achievement and improve behavior of students in the middle grades (Harrington-Lueker, USA TODAY, 3/15). The paper notes that early adolescence is a "turning point" for many children. Data from the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) found that while U.S. fourth-grade students were at the higher end in math and science, their scores dropped in the eighth grade. Other studies found that girls loose ground academically during the middle years of school.

The paper also cites a four-year study conducted by the Philadelphia school district that found students in K-8 schools achieved at higher levels and were more likely to gain admission to the city's competitive magnet high schools than students in middle schools were.

K-8 schools also "challenge" the idea that pre-teen students are best served in communities of their peers, reports USA TODAY. There is more adult interaction with students in most K-8 schools than in middle schools and a reverse peer pressure - the older students in a K-8 school, knowing that the younger children look up to them, often behave more appropriately.

For more information, visit USA TODAY at <http://www.usatoday.com>

FEDERAL POLICY NEWS

5.) ***** IDEA: FULL FUNDING
(Goal Three: Student Achievement)

A bill sponsored by Senators Hagel, Jeffords and Kennedy calls for full funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), with the goal of helping all children achieve to their potential. According to a National Education Association (NEA) press release, federal appropriations fall far short of the federal government's commitment to help meet the cost of educating students with disabilities. The federal share is supposed to be 40 percent, but only about 10 percent is actually funded. The

Hagel-Jeffords-Kennedy bill would increase investments over six years to the level promised when the program was developed almost 30 years ago.

Bob Chase, president of the NEA, said that inadequate funding often results in a lack of trained staff needed to provide services to students with disabilities.

For more information, visit the NEA at <http://www.nea.org> or the Council for Exceptional Children at <http://www.cec.sped.org>.

6.) ***** ESEA: UNANIMOUSLY PASSED IN SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
(All Goals)

The Senate education committee unanimously passed their version of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). EDUCATION WEEK writes that the BEST bill (Better Education For Students and Teachers Act) "embraces President Bush's call for more testing and consolidation of federal programs, but leaves out key changes sought by Republicans and Democrats." (Robelen, 3/14).

Two initiatives of President Bush's education plan omitted include a plan for "charter" states and districts that would allow them to convert most ESEA funding into a block grant in exchange for negotiating five-year performance agreements with the U.S. Department of Education. Another is the president's voucher proposal.

The committee also rejected Senator Kennedy's proposal to guarantee 50 percent of the teacher-quality money to be set aside for professional development.

For more information on President Bush's education plan No Child Left Behind, visit the Department of Education at <http://www.ed.gov>.

RESEARCH AND EDUCATION PRACTICES

7.) ***** BRAIN RESEARCH: CLASSROOM CONNECTION STILL WEAK
(Goal One: Ready To Learn and Goal Six: Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning)

While research on how the brain works has been advancing rapidly, specific applications to teaching remain unclear, writes the WASHINGTON POST (Strauss, 3/13). "There is really no research that links learning strategies or classroom methods to changes in brain structure," said John T. Bruer, president of the McDonnell Foundation in St. Louis and author of The Myth of the First Three Years. "Educators are making a very big mistake by wasting their time on 'brain-based' curricula."

The paper cites a new report from the National Research Council, From Neurons to Neighborhoods, that examined numerous studies from various fields in early childhood development and concluded that the key to "healthy early development and learning is maintaining nurturing and stable relationships - not Mozart for infants or flashcards for three-year-olds."

The field of neuroscience continues to evolve. For example, the notion that humans learn far more in the early years than in adulthood, partly based on an understanding that brain neurons and synapses were created only in utero and during the first years of life, is now being challenged. Some scientists argue that this brain activity occurs throughout life, supporting lifelong learning.

For more information on From Neurons to Neighborhood, visit the National

8.) ***** CIVIC KNOWLEDGE: AMERICA'S YOUTH
(Goal Three: Student Achievement and Citizenship)

Fourteen-year-olds in the United States scored above the international mean in all categories of a study conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement on civic education. The categories are: civic knowledge, engagement and positive civic attitudes. However, U.S. students rank low in political engagement.

Researchers surveyed nearly 90,000 fourteen-year-old students in 28 countries during the second phase of the Civic Education Study. The findings of the first study called Citizenship and Education in Twenty-eight Countries: Civic Knowledge and Engagement at Age Fourteen, provides information about what these students know and believe about democratic institutions and processes.

For more information, visit the Council for Basic Education at <http://www.c-b-e.org> and click on the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement study.

FEATURE STORY

9.) ***** FIGHT CRIME: ATTEND A QUALITY PRESCHOOL
(Goal One: Ready To Learn and Goal Seven: Safe Schools)

Officials from Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California, a state chapter of a national non-profit group of law enforcement officials and crime victims, are calling for California to increase wages for child care workers and for more child-care slots for working and disadvantaged families (Wronge, San Jose MERCURY NEWS, 3/15). The group cites several studies that link quality childcare in the early years to low rates of juvenile crime and delinquency.

"The bottom line is pay now, or pay later," said Sacramento County Sheriff Lou Blanas, a member of Fight Crime. "After-school and child-care programs are going to be a major solution to the problem of reducing crime and keeping kids out of trouble."

Research cited includes a 15-year study of disadvantaged children in Chicago's Child-Parent Centers. This program offers preschool and parent coaching classes. According to the paper, nearly 1,000 at-risk children who had been enrolled in 20 of these centers were compared at age 18 with children who received all-day kindergarten but not preschool, nor the parent-coaching program. Children without the preschool and coaching program were 60 percent more likely to have one juvenile arrest and nearly twice as likely to have two or more such arrests.

"These two groups of kids had very similar family and school experiences, so when you take that into account you see that the value added is the preschool participation," explained Arthur Reynolds, director of the Chicago Longitudinal Study at the University of Wisconsin.

Fight Crime is lobbying California legislators to add \$2 billion to the state budget over the next five years with the goal to increase wages for child-care workers and to increase the number of slots available for eligible working families.

Currently, the average cost of infant care in California is \$8,000 per year, which is 20 percent higher than the national average, reports the paper.

California is in the middle of a child-care crisis, with a tragic shortage of quality care making our streets less safe and our neighborhoods more dangerous," wrote Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca, in a response to the Fight Crime report.

For more information, visit Fight Crime: Invest in Kids at <http://www.fightcrime.org>.

The NEGP WEEKLY is a publication of:
The National Education Goals Panel
1255 22nd Street NW, Suite 502
Washington, DC 20037;
202-724-0015

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Publisher: Barbara A. Pape
<http://www.negp.gov>

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WHAT IS THE NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS PANEL?

The National Education Goals Panel is a unique bipartisan body of state and federal officials created in 1990 by President Bush and the nation's Governors to report state and national progress and urge education improvement efforts to reach the National Education Goals.

WHAT DOES THE GOALS PANEL DO?

The Goals Panel has been charged to:

- * Report state and national progress toward the National Education Goals.
- * Work to establish a system of high academic standards and assessments.
- * Identify promising and effective reform strategies.
- * Recommend actions for state, federal, and local governments to take.
- * Build a nationwide, bipartisan consensus to achieve the Goals.

WHAT ARE THE NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS?

There are eight National Education Goals set for the year 2000. They are:

- 1) All children will start school ready to learn.
- 2) The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90%.
- 3) All students will become competent in challenging subject matter.
- 4) Teachers will have the knowledge and skills they need.
- 5) U.S. students will be first in the world in math and science achievement.
- 6) Every adult American will be literate.
- 7) Schools will be safe, disciplined, and free of drugs, guns and alcohol.
- 8) Schools will promote parental involvement and participation.

WHO SERVES ON THE GOALS PANEL AND HOW ARE THEY CHOSEN?

Eight governors, four state legislators, four members of the U.S. Congress, and two members appointed by the President serve on the Goals Panel. Members are appointed by the leadership of the National Governors' Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the U.S. Senate and House, and the President. The number of Republicans and Democrats are made even by appointing five governors from the party that does not control the White House.

The current Panel Members are Governors Frank O'Bannon, IN (Chair, 2001); Jim Geringer, WY (Chair-elect); John Engler, MI; Jim Hodges, SC;

Frank Keating, OK; Paul E. Patton, KY; Jeanne Shaheen, NH; Tom Vilsack, IA;
U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman, NM; U.S. Senator Jim Jeffords, VT; U.S. Representative George Miller, CA; Representative G. Spencer Coggs, WI; Representative Mary Lou Cowlshaw, IL; Representative Douglas R. Jones, ID; Senator Stephen Stoll, MO.

The annual Goals Report and other publications of the Panel are available without charge upon request from the Goals Panel or at its web site <http://www.negp.gov>. Requests can be made by mail, fax, e-mail, or Internet.