

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION NEWS ROUNDUP

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Read this on the web at <http://www.acsso.org.au/RU080807.pdf>

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INTERNATIONAL

Underprivileged children: doubly disadvantaged at school

UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 30 May 2008

A new study by UNESCO's Institute for Statistics (UIS) highlights the strong effect of social inequality on primary education systems in many countries and the challenge to provide all children with equal learning opportunities.

Entitled A View Inside Primary Schools, the report presents the results of a unique survey undertaken in 11 countries in Latin America, Asia and North Africa.

As part of the World Education Indicators (WEI) programme, the countries were involved in developing and conducting the survey to examine the factors shaping the quality and equality of primary education.

Fourth grade teachers and principals from more than 7,600 schools responded to detailed questionnaires on how schools function, how teachers teach, learning conditions and the support available to teachers and principals.

"This survey offers a wealth of data. On the one hand, we see the extent to which schools lack the most basic elements - running water or electricity - that are taken for granted in the developed countries," says Hendrik van der Pol, director of the Institute. "But the data also reveal how social inequality affects a child's opportunity to learn. And clearly, no country - rich or poor - is immune to these disparities."

Read more at http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=42590&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

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CANADA

Education one of Canada's strong suits

Nick Taylor-Vaisey, Maclean's, 1 August 2008

While Canada lags behind other wealthy countries in terms of innovation and environmental stewardship, it performs quite well on the education and skills file, according to a report released by the Conference Board of Canada.

The study examined the performance of 17 countries and found that Canada's education system ranks second - one spot better than last year - with a B grade. Finland finished first with the only A grade. Italy finished last, the only country to score a D in the category.

The Conference Board lamented the poor adult literacy rate in Canada.

"Canada's one-size-fits-all policy in education, however, is not working for the more than 7 million Canadian adults who don't have the literacy skills considered necessary for success in today's economy and society. Four out of ten Canadian adults have difficulty coping with the literacy and numeracy demands of modern life and work, undermining both the productivity and the adaptability of the workforce."

Read more at <http://oncampus.macleans.ca/education/2008/08/01/education-one-of-canadas-strong-suits/>

Canadian Safe School Network

The Canadian Safe School Network (CSSN) is a national, not-for-profit, registered charitable organization with a mandate to reduce youth violence and make our schools and communities safer. The organization grew out of the Government of Ontario's Safe School Task Force and was launched in 1997 by representatives from police, education and business communities.

CSSN is the only organization of its kind in Canada and is recognized by national print, television and radio media as a primary source for information and comment on youth-violence issues of the day.

We are located in Toronto, Ontario however, with a national network of experts and professionals, the organization's services expand across the country.

At CSSN we believe that school and community safety is everybody's business and we encourage community members from both private and public sectors to become actively engaged and involved. As such, CSSN is committed to building and nurturing partnerships that enable the organization to meet its goals. CSSN works with police services, school boards, the municipal, provincial and federal governments and the business community to find new solutions to the problem of youth violence.

Since our inception, we have been very active in developing safe school resources, administering research, hosting conferences and professional development for educators and administrators and providing comprehensive and current commentary on safe school issues to media outlets throughout Canada.

Read more at <http://www.canadiansafeschools.com/>

NEW ZEALAND

Poverty Report Recommendations Must Be Taken On Board

NZEI Release, 7 August 2008

The education sector union NZEI Te Riu Roa is welcoming the recommendations made in a report on child poverty, which underlines the effect poverty can have on a child's learning.

NZEI says the report, "A Fair Go for all Children" commissioned by the Office of the Children's Commissioner and Barnardos, urges a broader social response to child poverty, and wants to see greater government and community commitment in tackling it.

Issues around poverty play a large part in children's underachievement, particularly in the outcomes for the 20 percent of children who make up New Zealand's so-called long tail of underachievement.

NZEI National President Frances Nelson says this latest report rightly identifies poverty as a major barrier to a child's ability to fully participate and get the most of their education. It states that poverty leads to developmental delay and lower educational attainment.

"Learning outcomes and poverty go hand in hand and as a society we need to address the social factors to ensure that children are well fed, well housed and well-clothed so they can get the most out of their learning. This report points to a wider social and government commitment to improving the lot of all New Zealand families and communities," Ms Nelson says.

Read more at <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/ED0808/S00016.htm>

New Zealand-Chile exchanges arranged

Association of University Staff, 7 August 2008

Up to 300 tertiary-education students a year from Chile may study in New Zealand under a new arrangement signed yesterday by the tertiary-education minister, Pete Hodgson, the education minister, Chris Carter, and the Chilean foreign minister, Alejandro Foxley.

Under the arrangement, the Chilean government will also facilitate visas and permits for New Zealand students, researchers, teachers, and their dependants for entry into Chile and provide guidance to New Zealand students for their enrolment in tertiary-education institutions in Chile.

"The Chile-New Zealand Arrangement on Human Capital Development Scholarships is only the beginning of a programme that will bring Chilean and New Zealand students, researchers, and institutions much closer," said Pete Hodgson.

The agreement is part of Chile's \$NZ7.8 billion Bicentennial Fund for Human Capital Development under which 300 scholarships a year will be offered by the Chilean government for students from Chile to study at a range of New Zealand universities, institutes of technology, polytechnics, and private training establishments.

New Zealand is among the first five countries to be included in the arrangement, along with Australia, Canada, Great Britain, and the United States.

Read more at <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/ED0808/S00014.htm>

Where are Labour and National's education policies?

Quality Public Education Coalition - QPEC, 22 July 2008

QPEC has begun analysing the education policies of the main political parties with a section of our website devoted to the topic.

The Green Party and Maori Party have provided comprehensive responses to key questions posed by QPEC looking at critical issues in education and we congratulate United Future as the first party to release its full education policy.

However the two major political parties have provided very little. Labour has still to respond to QPEC questions more than two months after they were submitted. The National Party responded quickly but there are major gaps in their policy where they have either not developed or not announced policy yet.

This is unacceptable from both these parties.

Education is a critical issue and one where we expect major differences to emerge between the parties. The public deserves this information to digest, debate and discuss these differences NOW instead of having policy dumped into a crowded public domain in the run-up to the election.

QPEC urges both parties to release their key education policies NOW.

Read more at <http://www.qpec.org.nz/Election-2008.html>

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NIGERIA

Report Indicates High Figure of Unqualified Teachers

Olubusuyi Adenipekun, Vanguard, 7 August 2008

One of the major challenges confronting the successful delivery of education at primary and junior secondary education levels is the large number of unqualified teachers who teach there.

This fact impinges negatively on the quality of basic education.

The results of the Personnel Audit conducted recently by UBEC indicates that there were 627,550 teachers at the basic education sub-sector (primary and junior secondary schools).

Out of this figure, 92,756 teachers were in the junior secondary schools while 534,794 were teaching in primary schools.

This is a big gap because primary education level nationwide requires 872,971 teachers ideally. Out of this 534,974 primary school teachers, only 294,884 (i.e. 55.2%) are qualified, leaving a shortfall of 578,087 from the ideal requirement.

Read more at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200808070349.html>

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SPAIN

Divorce May Lead to Increasing Quality of Education for Children in Spain

Tonya Thomas, Barcelona Reporter, 7 August 2008

In Spain, parents are discovering the benefits of 'fast track' divorce may lead to improving the quality of education their children receive.

Under current Spanish law, children are accepted into government funded state schools by way of a point system.

A child accrues points towards their selection in a school on the basis of factors like where they live, whether or not they have a disability, and economic disadvantage.

In 2007, the point system was altered to allow an additional awarding of points to children from single parent households.

This along with the 2005 streamlining of the divorce process, which now allows for what is commonly referred to as a 'fast track' divorce process has created new opportunities for fraud in the state funded educational system in Spain.

Recent BBC reports, as well as reports by various regional authorities, confirm a number of parents are taking advantage of these legal changes to increase their children's chances of obtaining a better quality education.

And, while authorities proclaim such tactics may, or may not be activities designed to circumvent the educational point system; they are actively investigating allegations of wrong doing in an increasing number of cases reported.

Read more at

http://www.barcelonareporter.com/index.php?/news/comments/divorce_may_lead_to_increasing_quality_of_education_for_children_in_spain/

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UGANDA

A Headmaster's View of Strikes in High Schools

Otushabire Tibyangye, Daily Monitor, 5 August 2008

It is Sunday morning, July 15 and students of Nganwa High School, Kabwohe in Bushenyi are expected to be preparing for mock exams for S4 and S6 while the rest of the school prepares for end of term exams.

But the students have a different idea; they want to punish the school authorities for what they call an 'embarrassment' on their part for having failed to satisfy their guests the previous day.

The visitors had come for a debate.

The students went on a rampage and destroyed school property including classroom windows, chairs and breaking into the canteen until the intervention of police.

When Daily Monitor visited Nganwa High School last year, the headmaster then, Mr Edward Mugisha, pointed out various reasons for strikes in schools.

Mr Mugisha is now headmaster of Ruyonza School in Ishaka, Bushenyi Town Council.

Automatic promotion of students has played a big role in school strikes where students are pushed from one class to another at primary school level without sieving the high achievers from the low achievers.

"There are lack of morals and responsibility among the students," Mr Mugisha said "Most of the students these days are irresponsible and think they can do anything."

Read more at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200808050079.html>

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UNITED KINGDOM

Fairer league tables 'no help to pupils'

Jessica Shepherd, Guardian, August 06 2008

The government's efforts to make school league tables fairer by taking into account pupils' socio-economic backgrounds can be misleading, a study by the schools inspectorate has found.

Since last year, state schools in England have been judged on the "value" they add to their pupils' educational experience as well as their exam results.

Schools have been given a score, known as "contextualised value added" or CVA, which assesses how well they do for their pupils.

This takes into account, among other things, the number of students on free school meals and with special educational needs, ethnicity, age, gender and the spread of ability.

In January 2004, the then school standards minister, David Miliband, said CVA would be a "fairer" way to judge schools.

But a study published today by the school inspectorate Ofsted concludes that ranking schools by their CVA scores is "meaningless" and "can lead to inappropriate conclusions".

Its author, David Jesson, an education professor at the University of York, warns the government to use CVA "with care" and "recognise its limitations".

Read more at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/aug/06/ofsted.schooltables>

More school means fewer teenage mothers

Anthea Lipsett, Guardian, August 06 2008

Making children leave school later could reduce the number of teenage mothers, according to new research.

The findings, publishing in the Economic Journal, lend weight to government plans to raise the compulsory education or training age to 18 by 2013 in England.

The UK still has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in western Europe, despite it being at its lowest level for 20 years in England and Wales (40.7 women in 1,000 in 2006).

The study suggests that more educated teenage girls are less likely to become mothers and being in school longer reduces the time available to engage in risky behaviour.

The researchers, Sandra Black of the University of California, Paul Devereux from University College Dublin and Kjell Salvanes of the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration analysed evidence from the US, which has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in the developed world, and Norway.

They found the US to be much more punitive in its treatment of young mothers than Norway, which provides extensive financial support for teenagers with children. But in both countries, increasing the compulsory school leaving age has reduced the incidence of teenage pregnancy.

Teenagers are less likely to become mothers the more educated they are. But until now, it was unclear whether forcing girls to stay in school longer would reduce the chance that they became mothers at a young age.

Read more at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/aug/06/teenage.mothers>

Tories attack school poverty gap

BBC, 4 August 2008

The schools system in England is failing poorer children "at every turn", says the Shadow Schools Secretary, Michael Gove.

He says initiatives to close social inequalities in exam results and staying on rates are not succeeding.

But the Conservatives say they have no plans to scrap the maintenance allowance to keep youngsters in school.

Schools Minister Jim Knight says that "Tory policies would simply preserve excellence for the few".

Mr Gove's speech asserted his party's commitment to strengthening family life, promoting responsible fatherhood and supporting children from the most deprived backgrounds.

Read more at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/7540590.stm

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The School Bully: Does It Run In The Family?

ScienceDaily Aug. 5, 2008

A review of national and international research on the issue is finding a family connection to the origins of young bullies. Elizabeth Sweeney, a University of Cincinnati master's degree student in sociology, presented her findings Aug. 3 at the 103rd annual meeting of the American Sociological Association.

Sweeney reviewed research out of England, Germany, Norway, Japan, South Africa and the United States, which she reports lagged behind the European countries in examining the phenomenon of bullying prior to this decade. The majority of the research that she examined involved children between the ages of nine and 16.

Sweeney says her review of the literature found that children raised by authoritarian parents - parents who are demanding, directive and unresponsive - are the most prone to act out bullying behavior.

On the other hand, there were parallels showing that children raised by nurturing, warm, responsive parents were less likely to bully.

"Children who experience hostility, abuse, physical discipline and other aggressive behaviors by their parents are more likely to model that behavior in their peer relationships," she writes. "Children learn from their parents how to behave and interact with others," Sweeney says. "So if they're learning about aggression and angry words at home, they will tend to use these behaviors as coping mechanisms when they interact with their peers."

Her review also found that children from middle-income families were less likely to bully than children from the high and low ends of the family income scale.

Read more at <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/08/080804111636.htm>

Kids Who Sleep Poorly at Risk for Being Overweight

Health Day News 4 August 2008

Getting too little sleep or not spending enough time in rapid eye movement (REM) sleep is associated with being overweight among children and teens, a new U.S. study finds.

For three consecutive nights, researchers assessed the sleep patterns of 335 youngsters, aged 7 to 17. They looked at total sleep time, time spent in REM, and time it took to fall asleep. Body-mass index was checked at the start of the study, and 45 participants (13.4 percent) were overweight, while 49 (14.6 percent) were at risk for becoming overweight.

Compared to normal-weight children, those who were overweight slept about 22 minutes less per night and had lower sleep efficiency (percentage of time in bed that a person is asleep), shorter REM sleep, less eye activity during REM sleep, and a longer wait before the first REM period.

After they adjusted for other factors, the researchers concluded that one hour less of total sleep was associated with a twofold increased risk of being overweight. One hour less of REM sleep was associated with a threefold increased risk.

Read more at http://news.yahoo.com/s/hsn/20080805/hl_hsn/kidswhosleeppoorlyatriskforbeingoverweight

Do Computers Help Students to Learn Better?

MSNBC 4 August 2008

Does a child learn better when he or she has a laptop to use in the classroom?

In the United States, Maine has led the way with its laptop program, which has made students more enthusiastic in the classroom, but not necessarily resulted in better test scores.

The state started its laptop program for 7th-graders in 2002, and later expanded it to 8th graders and to one-third of the state's high schools. Maine is spending \$90 million through 2010 with Apple to supply computers, software, warranties, technical support, training for teachers and installation of Wi-Fi networks in all middle schools across the state.

Every year, about 43,500 students and teachers get their own iBooks, which cost about \$600 each. The state of Maine says students can take their iBooks home after school and keep them during vacations.

The feedback from inside the classrooms has been pretty positive. More than 80 percent of instructors say the laptops help them make lessons more personal to students, make it easier for students to study problems from the real world and to dig deeper into certain topics, according to a survey by the Maine Education Policy Research Institute, established by the Maine legislature in 1995.

Many teachers who were surveyed also said that students using laptops are becoming better at combining information from multiple sources and expressing their thoughts. Students in the program report that they understand the material better.

But whether its program can measure up to the federal government's key yardstick - improvement in standardized test scores - is another question.

Read more at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/25782209/>

If dress code doesn't suit teens, school district will

Elizabeth White, Associated Press 1 August 2008

Violating Gonzales High School's dress code is not a crime, but some of the offenders are about to start looking a lot like convicts.

Soon after classes begin Aug. 25, violators of the district's beefed-up dress code must don navy blue coveralls unless they get another set of clothes from home - or serve in-school suspension. The outfits aren't just styled like prison jumpsuits - they're actually made by Texas inmates.

"We're a conservative community, and we're just trying to make our students more reflective of that," said Larry Wehde, Gonzales Independent School District deputy superintendent.

The new policy in Gonzales, about 70 miles east of San Antonio, has drawn plenty of criticism - along with some speculation that all the district will accomplish is to set off a new fashion trend.

Some parents and students are crying foul.

"They're not little prisoners," said Mary Helen Douglas, who has a 17-year-old son starting his senior year.

Read more at <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/metropolitan/5920441.html>

Education should lift all children

Susan B Neuman, 31 July 2008

Six years after the passage of the federal No Child Left Behind law, there is frustratingly little evidence that it will close the achievement gap between low-income, minority children and their middle-class peers. Despite the heroic attempts of many dedicated educators, NCLB-inspired school reforms, like so many others before, have failed and will continue to fail to change the trajectory of our disadvantaged children.

As President George W. Bush's assistant secretary for elementary and secondary education during NCLB's passage and initial implementation, I began my journey believing that raising standards would be enough to help low-income children succeed. I have learned that closing the achievement gap requires much more. The failure is not a result of the president's espoused "soft bigotry of low expectations," but because many children grow up in circumstances that make them highly vulnerable.

Schools educate middle-class children well but struggle to function as remedial, clinical institutions. Once a child starts falling behind in school, catching up is mostly a pipe dream.

In their 1995 book "Meaningful Differences," Betty Hart and Todd Risley calculated it would take approximately 41 hours of extra intervention per week to raise language scores of poor children to those of their well-off counterparts by age four -- and that's before starting preschool!

The impetus for change built into NCLB was to effectively "shame" schools into improvement. We now see that the shame game is flawed.

Schools fail not because they lack resources, or quality teachers. School influences are overwhelmed because so many children are molded by highly vulnerable and dysfunctional environments. The rhetoric of leaving no child behind has trumped reality.

A child born poor will likely stay poor, likely live in an unsafe neighborhood, landscaped with little hope, with more security bars than quality day care or after school programs. This highly vulnerable community will have higher proportions of very young children, higher rates of single parenting, and fewer educated adults. The child will likely find dilapidated schools, abandoned playgrounds, and teachers, though earnest, ready to throw in the towel. The child will drop further behind, with increasingly narrow options.

Shaming schools has become the cure to everything but the common cold, distracting attention from the devastating effects of poverty. We need to move beyond touting school reform as the magical elixir. It is important, but we need to mobilize other institutions to help solve this problem.

I've now joined with a group of national experts, from diverse backgrounds, areas of expertise and political beliefs, calling for a "broader, bolder approach" to education. Our proposals (www.boldapproach.org) certainly include improving schools, but tie changes in classrooms to changes in the world outside.

Read more at <http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080731/OPINION01/807310343>

Susan B. Neuman is a professor in educational studies specializing in early literacy development at the University of Michigan

Students, parents like single-gender programs

Seanna Adcox - The Associated Press 25 July 2008

Students, parents and teachers believe single-sex classes increase students' confidence, class participation and success in school, according to the results of a survey released Thursday by the state Education Department.

State Education Superintendent Jim Rex said the "overwhelmingly positive" results show why the idea of single-gender education has spread so rapidly across the state over the past year and that the state's push has been a good investment.

"If you want to know why more schools are offering this option, the reason is right here in these survey responses," he said.

South Carolina has become a national leader in offering single-gender programs in public school. At least 250 schools statewide are expected to offer single-gender classes in the coming school year, up from 70 schools last fall. About 30 schools added such classes in the past year.

Advocates say that by separating girls and boys, lessons can be made more effective because children learn in classrooms tailored to their learning styles and are not distracted by the opposite sex. But Rex stressed the program is a choice only.

Standardized tests taken in the spring will be evaluated to see whether separating genders improves achievement. But the survey shows the classes improve students' motivation, which goes a long way toward success, said David Chadwell, the state's single-gender coordinator, whose job includes teacher training. Hired last summer, he still holds the only such position in the nation.

Read more at <http://www.thestate.com/local/story/470711.html>

School board issues warning

Brittany Brown, hattiesburgamerica.com, 21 July 2008

Teachers and students in Lamar County can't be Internet friends this year after the school board revamped rules prohibiting them from being friends through online social networks.
Advertisement

And two other Pine Belt school districts are looking at similar policies.

The Lamar County school board approved the staff policy against online communication and text messaging between teachers and students at its July 7 meeting.

Social networks on the Internet, such as MySpace and Facebook, allow people to create profiles including pictures and personal information with the option of adding friends who also have online profiles.

The casual rapport between students and teachers concerned the school board, Superintendent Ben Burnett said.

"It's not to say teachers and students can't have a MySpace page; that's a First Amendment right," he said. "This just keeps them from communicating socially through those kinds of means."

Burnett said the school board hasn't decided what consequences the policy carries or how it will be monitored.

Read more at <http://www.hattiesburgamerican.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2008807210304>

Preparing Creative and Critical Thinkers

Donald J. Treffinger, July 2008

Teachers can help students become 21st-century problem solvers by introducing them to a broad range of thinking tools.

If you doubt that we live in a world of accelerating change, just consider the everyday life experiences of millions of children and teenagers today:

- They can view live images from every corner of the world and talk with or exchange video images with other young people who live many time zones away.
- They have more technology in their classrooms (and in many cases, in their backpacks) than existed in the workplaces of their parents 20 years ago.
- They will study subjects that were unknown when their teachers and parents were students, and they may well enter careers that do not exist today.
- In contrast with most of their parents, more of today's young people will routinely come into contact with other people of diverse backgrounds and experiences. They will grow up to interact, collaborate, and compete with others around the globe.

Once upon a time, educators might have said to their students, "If you'll pay close attention to what I'm going to teach you, you'll learn everything you need to know for a successful life." It's doubtful that this message was ever entirely true, but it's certainly not true today. We don't know all the information that today's students will need or all the answers to the questions they will face. Indeed, increasingly, we don't even know the questions.

These realities mean that we must empower students to become creative thinkers, critical thinkers, and problem solvers - people who are continually learning and who can apply their new knowledge to complex, novel, open-ended challenges; people who will proceed confidently and competently into the new horizons of life and work.

In education, we routinely teach students how to use various sets of cognitive tools to make academic work easier, more efficient, or more productive: for example, research methods, note-taking strategies, or ways to remember and organize information. In teaching thinking, we need to give students cognitive tools and teach them to use these tools systematically to solve real-life problems and to manage change. These tools apply to two essential categories: creative thinking and critical thinking.

Read more at

http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/template.MAXIMIZE/menuitem.c00a836e7622024fb85516f762108a0c/:jsessionid=IPZ57IRGhgj6Z3ootWRDjVRoVmxyIaplUC6Se4HIBWUdy2dzLTk5%211609873857?javax.portlet.tpst=818d37ec925d82800173fc1062108a0c_ws_MX&javax.portlet.prp_818d37ec925d82800173fc1062108a0c_viewID=article_view&javax.portlet.prp_818d37ec925d82800173fc1062108a0c_journalmoid=f9ef56a18b6ba110VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD&javax.portlet.prp_818d37ec925d82800173fc1062108a0c_articlemoid=844056a18b6ba110VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD&javax.portlet.begCacheTok=token&javax.portlet.endCacheTok=token

Donald J. Treffinger is President of the Center for Creative Learning, Sarasota, Florida;

I Know What You Did Last Math Class ...

Jan Hoffman, New York Times 4 May 2008

A profusion of online programs that can track a student's daily progress, including class attendance, missed assignments and grades on homework, quizzes and tests, is changing the nature of communication between parents and children, families and teachers. With names like Edline, ParentConnect, Pinnacle Internet Viewer and PowerSchool, the software is used by thousands of schools, kindergarten through 12th grade. PowerSchool alone is used by 10,100 schools in 49 states.

Although a few programs have been available for a decade, schools have been using them more in recent years as federal reporting requirements have expanded and home computers have become more common. Citing studies showing that parental involvement can have a positive effect on a child's academic performance, educators praise the programs' capacity to engage parents.

In rural, urban and suburban districts, they have become a new fact of life for thousands of families. At best, the programs can be the Internet's bright light into the bottomless backpack, an antidote for freshman forgetfulness, an early warning system and a lie detector.

But sometimes there is collateral damage: exacerbated stress about daily grades and increased family tension.

"The good is very good," said Nancy Larsen, headmaster of Fairfield Ludlowe High School in Connecticut, which uses Edline. "And the bad can become very ugly."

Read more at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/04/fashion/04edline.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

Budget crunch expected to increase class sizes in primary grades

Bruce Lieberman UNION-TRIBUNE May 3, 2008

Educators are loath to increase student enrollment in the youngest grades. But do smaller class sizes really make a difference in academic performance? The research, it turns out, doesn't offer a clear answer.

Since 1996, California has nevertheless set aside huge amounts of money - nearly \$2 billion for the current school year - to limit class sizes to 20 students in kindergarten through third grade. Those are the crucial early years of schooling, when children acquire reading and math skills that determine their success later.

Glazer and other teachers say small classes make for better learning environments and allow educators to better connect with their students, particularly when children are divided into reading and math groups of four to five individuals.

Initiatives across the nation to reduce class sizes followed a landmark study called Project STAR (Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio), conducted by the state of Tennessee in the late 1980s.

Children in kindergarten through third grade in classrooms with 13 to 17 students performed substantially better on standardized and curriculum-based tests than students in classes with 22 to 25 students, the study found.

Read more at <http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/education/20080503-9999-1n3kinder.html>

Creativity is important but neglected

Meris Stansbury, Assistant Editor, eSchool News, 2 May 2008

Educators and employers agree that creativity is increasingly important in U.S. workplaces, according to a recent report. Yet, the report suggests a disconnect exists between what survey respondents say they believe and how they act: In fact, findings indicate most high schools and employers provide creativity-conducive education and training only on an elective or "as needed" basis.

The report, "Ready to Innovate: Are Educators and Executives Aligned on the Creative Readiness of the U.S. Workforce?," was released in April by the Conference Board and Americans for the Arts, in partnership with the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). Researchers surveyed 155 public school superintendents and 89 American business executives to identify and compare their views on creativity.

The study is a follow-up to a 2006 report from the Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the Society for Human Resource Management, titled "Are They Really Ready to Work? Employers' Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century U.S. Workforce." In that earlier report, employers rated creativity and innovation among the top five most increasingly important workplace skills over the next five years. (See "Survey reveals the skills employers covet.")

The Conference Board also noted in a study last year that stimulating creativity and enabling entrepreneurship are among the top 10 challenges now facing U.S. CEOs.

Read more at <http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/top-news/?i=53690>

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