

# INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION NEWS ROUNDUP

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Read this on the web at <http://www.acsso.org.au/RU081218.pdf>

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## INTERNATIONAL

### **A "sense of urgency" underscores Eighth High Level Group meeting on Education For All**

*UNESCO, 11 December 2008*

Against the backdrop of the global financial crisis, education and development ministers, leading officials from multilateral and bilateral agencies, and representatives from civil society will meet in Oslo, Norway (16-17 December) to recommend strategies for accelerating progress towards achieving quality Education For All by 2015.

Organized by UNESCO and hosted by the Government of Norway, this eighth meeting of the High Level Group on Education for All will be opened by UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura with the Prime Minister of Norway, Jens Stoltenberg, H.M Queen Rania of Jordan, H.R.H. Crown Prince Haakon of Norway and the President of Senegal,

Abdoulaye Wade (16 December, 3.30 pm – 5 pm, Oslo Town Hall). A video message from United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, will also be presented

Discussions will focus on overcoming inequality using education as a driver for change.

Read more at [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=44256&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=44256&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

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## **Beyond the Diploma Mills**

*Sarah Garland, Newsweek, 13 December 2008*

The only hope of closing the literacy gap in developing countries lies in extending the reach of online education.

Many kids play hooky all day, every day. More than 40 percent of children old enough to attend secondary school are not in the classroom, many because of violent conflict in their home countries.

Another 800 million adults are illiterate. Efforts to reach these people have stumbled because of a lack of teachers, poor governance and declining foreign aid.

Educators are coming to believe that the only hope of closing the literacy gap in developing countries lies in extending the reach of online education.

Once disparaged as the jurisdiction of "diploma mills" and profiteers, the Internet is reforming this image: there's an explosion of new Web-based teaching tools made available to struggling school systems, from free open-source curriculums to online networks for refugee children trying to keep up with their classwork.

Read more at <http://www.newsweek.com/id/174539/page/1>

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## **'Educate girls to stop population soaring'**

*Steve Connor, Independent (UK), 4 December 2008*

The longer girls stay at school, the fewer children they have, professor says

The explosive growth in the global population could be curbed significantly if teenage girls in the developing world were given the opportunity of completing a secondary school education, says a leading expert in human numbers.

Putting girls in developing countries through secondary school is one of the single most important factors that causes them to have fewer babies in later life, said Joel Cohen, professor of populations at the Rockefeller University in New York.

That could cut the expected growth in the human population by as much as three billion by 2050. The present global population is 6.7 billion but would rise to as much as 11.9 billion by then if current trends continue. "Secondary education increases people's capacity and motivation to reduce their own fertility, improve the survival of their children and care for their own and the families' health," Professor Cohen said.

"Education promotes a shift from the quantity of children in favour of the quality of children. This transition reduces the future number of people using environmental resources and enhances the capacity of individuals and societies to cope with environmental change."

Read more at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/dramatic-improvement-in-science-and-maths-1059454.html>

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## **Inequality undermining education opportunities for millions of children**

*UNESCO, 25 November 2008*

The failure of governments across the world to tackle deep and persistent inequalities in education is consigning millions of children to lives of poverty and diminished opportunity, according to a report published by UNESCO today.

Blaming a combination of political indifference, weak domestic policies, and the failure of aid donors to act on commitments, the 2009 Education for All Global Monitoring Report – Overcoming inequality: why governance matters - warns that 'unacceptable' national and global education disparities are undermining efforts to achieve international development goals.

"When financial systems fail, the consequences are highly visible and governments act," commented UNESCO's Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura, adding: "When education systems fail the consequences are less visible, but no less real. Unequal opportunities for education fuel poverty, hunger, and child mortality, and reduce prospects for economic growth. That is why governments must act with a greater sense of urgency."

The UNESCO report documents what it describes as a 'vast gulf' in educational opportunity separating rich and poor countries.

Read more at [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=44116&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=44116&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

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## **INDIA**

### **Bill plans to ban school entry test**

*Charu Sudan Kasturi, The Telegraph (India), 14 December*

Schools will be banned from holding admission tests or seeking "donations" from guardians if a bill to be tabled this week is passed without change.

The right to education bill commits the government to implementing the "neighbourhood schooling system" across India within three years, despite opposition to some provisions from the Planning Commission, officials have told The Telegraph.

The Free and Compulsory Education Bill will not just guarantee schooling to all children between 6 and 14, it is obliged to provide schooling within the block in which the student lives.

Educators have long been demanding neighbourhood schooling. But successive governments have never committed themselves to the concept, which requires a basic uniformity in regulations and standards that many private schools are opposed to.

The idea enshrined in the bill is loosely modelled on the British comprehensive school system that caters to nearly 90 per cent of secondary school students there.

Like the British system, the right to education bill bars schools from selecting students through a screening process that aims to gauge their aptitude. Schools — public, aided or private — can only admit students through a random lottery under the bill.

Read more at [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1081215/jsp/frontpage/story\\_10253154.jsp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1081215/jsp/frontpage/story_10253154.jsp)

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## **NEW ZEALAND**

### **Teaching kids money skills goes down well**

*Retirement Commission, 18 December 2008*

Teaching kids money skills goes down well

A trial to teach young people money skills at school has been overwhelmingly positive, according to Retirement Commissioner Diana Crossan.

The trial ran in ten schools last term to test a framework to help teach students about managing everyday money. The country's banks helped fund the trial.

"The world of finance is changing rapidly and is increasingly complex. The Retirement Commission is working towards young people having the necessary skills and information to make informed and wise decisions about money when they leave school.

"The programme is designed to teach younger students basic concepts about where money comes from and how to look after it. Older students are taught about managing risk, long term planning and analysing the different types of debt," said Diana Crossan.

Read more at <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/ED0812/S00076.htm>

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### **Schools' financial troubles signal need for system review**

*Post Primary Teachers' Association, 17 December 2008*

The financial crisis at Marlborough Boys' College is a stark illustration of the need to seriously re-examine New Zealand's schooling system.

The PPTA is calling on education minister Anne Tolley to urgently review the Tomorrow's Schools initiative as boards struggle to find the knowledge and experience to make the system work, junior vice president Kate Gainsford says.

"The financial situation at Marlborough Boys' has reached such a critical level that the board is now asking for a \$1.7 million loan to bail it out. At the same time we are witnessing a meltdown at Fairfield College in Hamilton. Suggestions that the answer is to throw more money at the problem are simplistic and wasteful," she said.

"There is no point in pumping money into the system without a review of the structural problems".

The Tomorrow's Schools model puts parents in charge of school governance, regardless of whether they have the qualifications, time and specialist knowledge to do the job.

Read more at <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/ED0812/S00067.htm>

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## Unicef report demands government policy responses

*Quality Public Education Coalition, 12 December 2008*

The just released United Nations Children's Fund survey on how governments in developed countries treat children has found New Zealand fails to meet minimum standards in many areas.

Among other things New Zealand has very high levels of child poverty, poor parental leave provisions and poor access to early childhood education.

In the case of early childhood education it is the very children who need these services the most who have the most limited access.

The Unicef report clearly identifies the reasons for the greatest educational problem we face which is the long tail of underachievement which hangs like an albatross around the country's neck.

Read more at <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/ED0812/S00050.htm>

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## PERU

### Laptops May Change The Way Rural Peru Learns

*Larry Abramson, NPR (USA), 13 December 2008*

In Peru, there are 10,000 one- and two-room schools — and thousands of children who live in homes without running water or electricity. But now, many of those same kids are the proud owners of their own little piece of modern technology: a laptop computer.

The laptops are part of a huge educational experiment. Peru is purchasing hundreds of thousands of low-cost computers developed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and leading technology experts as part of the One Laptop Per Child project.

The introduction of the OLPC program is meant to flip a switch and link poor, rural villages to the modern era.

Take a small school in Arahuary, a tiny village perched on the edge of the Andes Mountains, 8,000 feet above sea level. A lot about Arahuary makes it feel impossibly isolated: poor roads, steep landscape, limited running water and electricity.

Students at the school received their laptops in the spring of 2007. Some students live far away from the school — which teaches grades 1 through 12 — and so they must walk for miles. Many swing their laptops as they make the daily trek.

And when they arrive at school and begin to work, the students use their laptops for everything.

Read more at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=96510072>

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## SAUDI ARABIA

### The joke of private schools

*Khalaf Al-Harbi, Okaz, Arab News, 18 December 2008*

The biggest joke in this country is the private schools.

You pay a lot of money for your son or daughter to learn, but the surprise is that it is you who will learn at the end. You will come to learn that you have fallen prey to the red tape that allowed these bad companies to call themselves "schools."

You will also come to learn that any complaint you may dare to file against the school will be settled by a telephone call from the principal of the school in which he will say, "Rid us of this nagging parent. He is annoying us!"

I sincerely wish I knew the official in charge of granting licenses for the establishment of private schools. I want to understand from him how things go in his department.

I would not delve with him into the educational system, the syllabuses or the other terms and conditions concerning private education.

I would simply ask him to go to any private school and try to find a parking place for his car in front of the villa that calls itself a school.

Read more at <http://www.arabnews.com/?page=13&section=0&article=117306&d=18&m=12&y=2008>

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## UNITED KINGDOM

### Balls to hold agony aunt 'summit'

*BBC, 18 December 2008*

Schools Secretary Ed Balls is getting together with Britain's agony aunts for a "relationship summit".

An "anguish of agony aunts" - the collective noun chosen by themselves - will advise ministers on how to support children facing family breakdown.

About 250,000 couples separate each year, affecting about 350,000 children.

Mr Balls said family breakdown can "sometimes scar children for life - that is why there is a role for government to intervene".

Official figures suggest three million of the UK's 12m children will see their parents separate during the course of their childhood.

Read more at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/7788685.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7788685.stm)

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## Agony aunts to cheer up UK's children

*Richard Garner, The Independent, Friday, 12 December 2008*

Since Unicef, the UN children's charity, reported last year that British youngsters were the unhappiest in the Western world, government ministers have been on the back foot about how children are cared for in the UK.

As a result, 29 of the contributors supplying answers to people's everyday problems in national newspapers and on television will be attending what the Department for Children, Schools and Families calls a "relationships summit" next week. They will include Deidre Sanders, of The Sun, who has been answering readers' problems since 1980.

According to the Children's Secretary, Ed Balls, the group approached his department to offer it the benefit of its members' skills. They believe that by helping parents sort out any problems they are having with their spouse or partner, they will also be giving children more stable home lives so that they do better at school.

"We are funding the summit," Mr Balls said. "The idea is to produce a guide for parents which will help them with their relationship difficulties which would provide a more stable environment for their children while they are at school."

Read more at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/agonyaunts-to-cheer-up-uks-children-1062894.html>

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## Boost for speech and language

*BBC, 17 December 2008*

Plans to improve services for children with speech and language problems have been welcomed by groups who represent young people, parents and therapists.

A £12m government action plan will see pilot initiatives set up in 20 local areas in England, as well as grants given to the communication sector.

And a £1.5m research project will examine speech and language needs.

The scheme follows a report that found services for children with language problems was "highly unsatisfactory."

Read more at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/education/7785341.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/7785341.stm)

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## Dramatic improvement in science and maths

*Richard Garner, Independent, Wednesday, 10 December 2008*

A Sharp improvement in the performance of 14-year-olds taking maths and science in England has been revealed in an international study.

But research shows they no longer find either subject as much fun as they used to – with 25 per cent fewer pupils reporting a highly positive attitude towards maths lessons and 21 per cent fewer liking science.

"They see the importance of studying maths and doing well in it to help them in their working lives," said the Schools minister Jim Knight. "They're knuckling down and getting on with it, doing their homework." He acknowledged, though, that the next step was to make lessons more enjoyable through better training for teachers to make lessons more exciting.

The results of the Trends in Maths and Science Study revealed that England had come seventh out of 49 countries in an international maths test for 14-year-olds compared with 18th out of 46 in a similar study four years ago. In science, England had climbed to fifth out of 49 from seventh out of 46.

Read more at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/dramatic-improvement-in-science-and-maths-1059454.html>

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## **Schools told reading is top priority:**

### **Review of teaching says parents in poorer homes must read to children**

*Richard Garner, Independent, Monday, 8 December 2008*

A drive to improve reading standards which includes encouraging parents to read to children will be outlined today in the most far-reaching review of primary schooling in 20 years.

Evidence shows that children from the poorest homes hear only 13 million words by the time they are aged four, 32 million words less than children from affluent households.

The figure, given to the government-ordered review of the primary school curriculum, has prompted a campaign to ensure parents spend more time talking to their children and that children struggling to read get more help.

The review will seek to remove "clutter" from the curriculum, reducing lesson time for subjects like history and geography in favour of a more themed approach that links subjects. And it aims to build on the strengths of primary pupils, particularly in technology, by teaching them secondary school topics like making podcasts and radio programmes and using the internet to share projects with other schools.

Read more at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/dramatic-improvement-in-science-and-maths-1059454.html>

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## **Study indicates white parents 'show less interest in education'**

*Richard Garner, Independent, Saturday, 29 November 2008*

White parents are less likely to take an interest in their children's education than black or Asian parents. And they are also more likely to believe that their children's schooling should be left up to their teachers, according to a study for the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Their lack of involvement is likely to hamper their children's chances of exam success later in life, it says, adding that black parents are more than twice as likely to say they are very involved in their children's education than whites. Black and Asian parents say education is "very important to combat racial discrimination and disadvantage".

It also showed that Chinese and Asian youths consistently outperformed white pupils in maths and English national curriculum tests. The research comes after the Rowntree Foundation found that white working-class pupils made the least progress throughout their schooling.

In a further finding, it revealed that 70 per cent of fathers wanted to play a bigger role in their children's education – rising to 81 per cent in cases where the father no longer lived at home.

Read more at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/white-parents-show-less-interest-in-education-1040255.html>

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## 10 per cent of pupils fail to master maths

*Richard Garner, Independent, Wednesday, 19 November 2008*

More than 30,000 children are finishing primary school every year with the mathematical ability of a seven-year-old, a report says today. The 11-year-olds are four years behind in maths skills when they arrive at secondary school, despite £2.3bn a year being spent teaching the subject.

The findings emerge from an investigation into primary school maths teaching by the National Audit Office, the public spending watchdog.

It shows that 66,000 children – about one in 10 – left primary school this summer still struggling to master the subject after failing to reach the required standard for their age in national curriculum tests, although the standard they reached at seven suggested they should have done.

In addition, 34,000 had the maths ability of a child of seven. Overall, 132,000 youngsters failed to reach the required standard this year.

Read more at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/10-per-cent-of-pupils-fail-to-master-maths-1024594.html>

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## Single-sex schools 'are the future'

*Richard Garner, Independent, Tuesday, 18 November 2008*

Differences in how male and female brains work mean single-sex schooling will make a comeback, a leading headmistress says.

Vicky Tuck, president of the Girls' School Association, which represents the country's top independent girls' schools, told her association's annual conference in Winchester: "Far from living in the dying days of single-sex education, I am confident that as understanding of the brain continues to evolve, what is obvious to us will become obvious to everyone: girls learn in a different way to boys and it is crucial to cater for their separate needs."

"I have a hunch that in 50 years' time, maybe only 25, people will be doubled up with laughter when they watch documentaries about the history of education and discover people once thought it was a good idea to educate adolescent boys and girls together."

She cited evidence in support of her argument showing that neurological differences between the sexes meant girls' brains worked differently to boys' and added it would reverse a 40-year trend towards co-educational schools.

Read more at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/singlesex-schools-are-the-future-1023105.html>

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## **Pupils' excuses keep up with technology**

*Chris Court, Independent, Tuesday, 18 November 2008*

Schoolchildren have always been inventive when it comes to excuses for not handing in their homework - and now they are increasingly blaming technology, a new survey revealed today.

According to the research, the average British teacher hears 15 homework excuses a week. That works out at 6.5 million excuses a week across the country - with 1.3 million of these related to technology.

Over the last 12 months the 1,000 UK-based teachers surveyed said they had seen a 30 per cent increase in the number of tech-related excuses being heard in the classroom.

The top five most popular tech-related reasons for not doing homework are:

- My computer crashed and I lost it;
- I finished my homework but then I deleted it by accident;
- I could not print it out;
- My internet was down so I could not do any research;
- I lost my laptop.

Teachers revealed other tech-related excuses including:

- My dad's computer was hacked by the Russians and they stole my homework;
- A burglar stole my printed-out homework along with the computer;
- The PC exploded when our dog went to the toilet on it;
- I accidentally tipped a bottle of cider over the computer and it broke.

The study revealed 70 per cent of school teachers noticed an upsurge in the number of pupils blaming technology for not doing homework. And 68 per cent of pupils are now submitting school work typed on a computer - making it far easier to blame technological faults.

The amount of work being done on PCs and laptops is also making tech-related tales more believable to teachers, with one in four admitting they were less likely to challenge them.

Read more at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/pupils-excuses-keep-up-with-technology-1023669.html>

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## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

### Arne Duncan: a reformer as U.S. education secretary

*The Seattle Times, December 17, 2008*

Barack Obama's nomination of Chicago schools chief Arne Duncan signals a commitment to education reform as well as constructive engagement among often warring sectors of the education community. His reforms in Chicago, including controversial steps of closing poor-performing schools, yielded impressive results.

President-elect Barack Obama's choice for Education Secretary signals two important advances in public education: a push for continued reforms and an upcoming period of détente in the education wars.

Chicago schools chief Arne Duncan is a change agent. He has shaken up the status quo with support for charter schools, performance pay and strict accountability for struggling schools.

He has gotten results.

In just seven years, Duncan boosted elementary test scores in Chicago from 38 percent of students meeting standards to 67 percent. The dropout rate in the country's third-largest school system has gone down every year under Duncan's tenure.

Read more at [http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/editorialsopinion/2008532391\\_edit18educa.html](http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/editorialsopinion/2008532391_edit18educa.html)

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### Obama names new US education secretary

*Sydney Morning Herald, December 17, 2008*

US president-elect Barack Obama has nominated Arne Duncan, the tough-minded Chicago schools superintendent, as the next secretary of education with a mandate to overhaul failing schools.

Duncan, 44, played professional basketball in Australia from 1987 to 1991 before returning to his native Chicago in 1992.

He has been the chief executive of the Chicago Public Schools, the country's third largest school system, for seven years.

As the point man on education, Duncan will be tasked with raising standards at struggling public schools while not antagonising the powerful teacher unions that supported the Obama campaign.

At a news conference on Tuesday, Obama said to allow US schools to crumble further was "morally unacceptable for our children and economically untenable for America".

Unlike many countries with highly centralised national education standards and curricula, the United States' public education system is run overwhelmingly at the local level.

Read more at <http://news.smh.com.au/world/obama-names-new-us-education-secretary-20081217-6zy7.html>

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### Who Will Obama Pick as Secretary of Education?

*Time Magazine, 7 November 2008*

As Barack Obama begins to assess his potential picks for his cabinet, Secretary of Education is not one of the positions you would necessarily expect him to focus on first.

But American parents especially may wish to study up on the possible candidates. After all, if Obama's campaign proposals are to be fulfilled, Margaret Spellings' successor could oversee a dramatic \$18 billion overhaul of the nation's public education system over the next few years.

Whoever gets the spot, Obama's new Ed chief should expect to face a huge test right off in the contentious reauthorization of the federal No Child Left Behind act, considered to be one of the first priorities in Congress come January.

Down the road, he or she can also plan to direct the founding of hundreds of new charter schools and the spread of universal pre-K nationwide, as well as a continued focus on increased accountability and a better trained teacher corps.

So whom will President-Elect Obama tap for this enormous task? That announcement isn't expected until at least early next week. But here's a look at some of the presumed contenders.

Read more at <http://www.time.com/time/politics/article/0,8599,1857195,00.html>

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## **US Research Report: "Special Education in America"**

The nation's public school systems collectively educate more than 6 million students with disabilities, about nine percent of the school-age population. Nearly one-third of those disabled students are of traditional high school age.

This new report from the EPE Research Center examines a variety of challenges crucial to understanding special education in today's high schools, including the types of educational settings in which services are provided, the diagnosis of disabilities, overrepresentation of particular student groups, school discipline, academic achievement, high school completion and transitions into adulthood.

More than at any other time in the history of American education, youth with disabilities receive instruction in school settings similar to those serving the general student population, continuing the trend of mainstreaming.

This movement toward greater educational inclusion has resulted from decades of litigation, federal law, and local policymaking.

The total number of students in special education programs is also on the rise, a development fueled in large part by rapid growth in two particular disability categories—Other Health Impairments (which includes attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or ADHD) and Specific Learning Disabilities (which encompasses a wide variety of diagnoses that do not fit under other existing classifications).

A number of concerns repeatedly surfaced in our investigation of the factors that define the state of special education in the nation's high schools. We believe that attention to these issues can help to strengthen the future efforts of both policymakers and educators.

Download the report at [http://www.edweek.org/media/eperc\\_specialeducationinamerica.pdf](http://www.edweek.org/media/eperc_specialeducationinamerica.pdf)

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## But Are the Schools Really Getting Better?

*Heinrich Mintrop, Edweek, 10 December 2008*

Judging by state tests, school accountability systems are a success. In most states, test scores are going up. And such gains confirm, for the proponents of accountability, that the systems are working. Critics, however, point out that there are ways to raise test scores without improving student learning.

Meanwhile, and despite the shifting meanings that test scores may hold, low-performing schools in high-stakes systems continue to feel the stigma of failure, while their high-performing counterparts are held up as exemplary.

But are schools measured as high-performing by their accountability systems actually better schools? And could others learn from them what to do better?

My colleague Tina Trujillo and I wanted to know the answer. We sampled a number of California schools from both the top and bottom of the performance spectrum, controlling for demographics, and ended up with nine urban middle schools for our study.

The differences between our high and low groups on the state performance indicator, viewed in the context of the state as a whole, amounted to about five years of growth. Such score differences ought to be tangible in the life and quality of schools, we surmised, if accountability measures are valid and relevant for school improvement.

For our study, we imagined educators from the low-performing schools traveling to the top-performing exemplars. What would they investigate during their visits? They'd check the schools' orderliness; find out if students felt safe, cared for, engaged with learning, and challenged; observe teachers to see about time on task, instructional formats, and the cognitive complexity and tone of instruction; and sample student writing as to mechanics and content.

They also would be interested in faculty cohesion, teachers' and administrators' sense of responsibility, innovativeness, strength of leadership, and improvement strategies. And they would want to know whether the system itself was important and meaningful for the teachers.

Then we set about to translate our imagined travelers' inquisitiveness into systematic research with robust survey, observation, and evaluation tools—and we controlled for biases.

Read more at <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/12/10/15mintrop.h28.html?tmp=311377751>

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## School Finance Systems Need Overhaul, Study Says

*Michele McNeil, Education Week, 27 October 2008*

Policymakers need to turn the nation's school finance systems on their head by connecting education dollars to student-achievement goals and outcomes, giving better information about how money is spent, and funding research that's more closely aligned with the classroom, according to a study by top education researchers released today.

The 39-page "Funding Student Learning" is the product of five years of work and a \$5.2 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It was researched and compiled by the National Working Group on Funding Student Learning, a team that included 11 researchers and education advocates from across the country.

The group's members included Christopher Edley Jr., the dean of the law school at the University of California, Berkeley; Paul T. Hill, the director of the Center on Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington in Seattle; and Susanna Loeb, an associate professor of education at Stanford University.

Read more at <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/10/29/11finance.h28.html?tmp=1515433944>

Download the report at [http://www.crpe.org/cs/crpe/view/csr\\_pubs/247](http://www.crpe.org/cs/crpe/view/csr_pubs/247)

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## Personalized Learning Puts Students In A Class Of Their Own

*ScienceDaily Oct. 27, 2008*

A new learning platform is giving the traditional classroom a radical makeover. Using innovative ICT technology, iClass is putting pupils at the centre of the learning experience and providing them with more control over what they learn.

Every parent believes their child is unique. And they are right. Every pupil has their own individual strengths and weaknesses, and their own particular way of learning. However, putting this commonsense observation into practice is no mean feat, and our schools have generally not been very successful at personalising the learning experience.

In fact, the image of classrooms as 'knowledge factories' has not changed much since the Industrial Revolution, despite the major advances in teaching methods that have occurred. This model holds that teachers input information, pupils process it, and out comes the learning in neat little packages.

"A school is not a factory," bemoaned British novelist JL Carr in his acclaimed novel, *The Harpole Report*, which tells the story of a primary school headmaster. "Its raison d'être is to provide opportunity for experience."

Read more at <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/10/081027144645.htm>

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## USA High Schools Add Electives to Cultivate Interests

*Winnie Hu, New York Times, October 26, 2008*

The students in the jewelry and metalsmithing class at Pelham Memorial High School painstakingly coiled copper and brass wires into necklaces the other morning, while across the hall, the history of rock 'n' roll class pondered the meaning of Don McLean's "American Pie."

These are two of the 17 electives added this year to the curriculum in this affluent Westchester County suburb, redefining traditional notions of a college-preparatory education and allowing students to pursue specialized interests that once were relegated to after-school clubs and weekend hobbies. Now, budding musicians take guitar lessons, amateur war historians re-enact military battles, and future engineers build solar-powered cars — all during school hours, and for credit.

"It's letting people learn about what they love rather than dictating what they should be learning," said Morgan McDaniel, a senior who added the rock 'n' roll class to her roster of Advanced Placement classes in calculus, biology, European history and studio art.

After years in which tight school budgets and a battery of federal and state testing mandates have narrowed curriculums nationwide to emphasize basic reading, math and science, Pelham and a handful of other high-performing school districts have begun to expand their course catalogs with electives.

In Pelham, the high school spent \$125,000 — with \$21,000 of it from a local foundation — to expand its electives by 50 percent this year after extending its school day and adjusting the class schedule to create an extra 40-minute class

period. Jeannine Clark, the principal, said she hired only one new teacher, in art, covering the other classes by adding stipends or rearranging teachers' workloads.

Read more at [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/27/education/27electives.html?\\_r=1&ref=education&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/27/education/27electives.html?_r=1&ref=education&oref=slogin)

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## Project Learning Serves the Most At-Risk Students

**Urban students on the verge of quitting scale new heights -- and remain in school -- through an ambitious program.**

*Lisa Morehouse, Edutopia Magazine, October 2008*

These students are clearly engaged in learning. Not long ago, they were ready to drop out of school. Firmly on the path leading away from graduation, Bustos, Carter, and their hiking companions made a sharp U-turn, by way of Downtown High School, toward success.

Downtown is a continuation high school in southeast San Francisco that educates students whose truancy, lack of credits, early parenthood, poor behavior, or prior incarceration have put them at risk for dropping out. The student population is predominantly African American and Latino, two ethnic groups that have tended to fall below their peers in achievement rankings, both nationally and locally.

"The school is designed to serve the most at-risk, most disenfranchised students in the district, those who haven't been successful in other schools," says Catherine Salvin, a longtime Downtown teacher and a member of the school's leadership team.

The school's approach to reengaging students in learning has an important twist: Downtown's curriculum is entirely project based. Its alternative format allows students to choose a thematic, integrated pathway of subjects each semester, find connections among these subjects in real-world settings, and, hopefully, discover their passions along the way.

Downtown's structure works well for student Zach Jefferson. "You're almost like a robot at a traditional high school," he says. "Here, you actually have a choice about what you want to learn."

Read more at <http://www.edutopia.org/at-risk-students-project-learning>

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