

# EDUCATION DAILY

The education community's independent daily news service

## Senators mull teacher effectiveness, retention

By **Stephen Sawchuk**

*Staff Writer*

Teachers need better preparation for the realities of urban high-poverty schools and the support of stronger mentoring and school leadership in order to be effective.

That was the underlying message from stakeholders at a **Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions** hearing held Tuesday that, at times, took on grab-bag characteristics as each stakeholder detailed the elements of different local programs working towards retaining effective teachers and leaders.

Yet that diversity of approaches embodies the challenge the Senate will face during No Child Left Behind reauthorization — using federal policy to magnify the effect of programs that have been thus far locally based. The Senate also will need to balance between authorizing more incentive funding and a stronger set of federal teacher and principal effectiveness requirements, such as those detailed by the **NCLB Commission** report.

Despite the challenges, HELP members unanimously proclaimed high-quality, effective teachers and principals to be of paramount importance in improving education.

“It mostly boils down to parents, teachers and principals,” said Sen. **Lamar Alexander**, R-Tenn. “Everything else is 5 percent.”

### Many models

Stakeholders testifying before the committee detailed several different approaches to recruitment and retention of effective teachers and principals. Several, including **Stanford University** researcher **Linda Darling-Hammond** and **Jesse Solomon**, director of the Boston Teacher Residency Program, advocated a preparation method based on the medical residency model.

The Boston program, for example, pairs recruits with experienced mentors and ties instructional methods to ongoing fieldwork in urban classroom settings.

Other stakeholders favored programs giving teachers more professional development time within the workweek, while still others praised the Teacher

(See **TEACHER** on page 6)

## Today's Highlights

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### CTE

Career and technical education critical to global competitiveness ..... **Page 2**

### NCLB REAUTHORIZATION

Experts say dearth of high school counselors must be addressed ..... **Page 3**

**Daily Briefing** ..... **Pages 4-5**

**Bits & Pieces** ..... **Page 5**

## Capitol Hill watch

### Senators: National nutrition standards needed in schools

New regulations would restrict vending machine sales

By **Patti Mohr**

*Staff Writer*

Nutritional standards governing federally subsidized school breakfasts and lunches do not protect the nation's students from corporate marketers selling unhealthy snack foods and candy bars in school vending machines, according to witnesses testifying Tuesday before a **Senate** panel.

In fact, according to **Kelly Brownell**, director of **Yale University's** Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, the school nutritional environment is so unsafe that it is contributing to rampant childhood obesity and a diabetes epidemic. Brownell argued that despite local efforts to create wellness policies, the food and beverage industry has successfully implemented mass-marketing campaigns that have created a public health disaster for the nation's schoolchildren.

“The school environment has become a marketer's dream,” Brownell said. “Snack foods,

(See **NUTRITION** on page 3)

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# Experts: CTE critical to global competitiveness efforts

By Steve Berlin

Staff Writer

Experts agreed Tuesday that the demands of global economic competitiveness for the United States require career and technical education to become an integral part of public education, overall.

The panel of policy crafters and an industry executive speaking at an **Association for Career and Technical Education** National Policy Seminar said that CTE makes academics relevant for students, and when students graduate instead of dropping out there are no losers.

**David Byer**, senior associate for education leadership and policy at **Apple®** computers, said today's students are no longer looking for a lifelong job at a single company. This means they need to be creative and critical thinkers with the ability to learn many tasks for different jobs and careers.

"Basics aren't enough," he said of the courses and tests mandated in the No Child Left Behind Act. "But even the best of the best isn't necessarily what we need for workers in our workplaces. Focus on science and math and language arts is all really good, but it doesn't go far enough. It's not applied enough."

Instead of touting overall skills, however, **Susan Sclafani**, former head of the **Education Department's Office of Vocational and Adult Education** and now managing director of **Chartwell Education Group**, supported the abbreviated high school proposal suggested last

year by **The New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce**.

The commission, of which Sclafani was a member, posited that if students demonstrate core content knowledge by age 16, they could move into apprenticeship-style professional training courses.

"Unless we start in elementary school with a career orientation for our young people, we're not

going to motivate them to become students," Sclafani said. "Unless we use some of the hands-on strategies so common in CTE, we are going to continue to lose over 50 percent of our African-American and Hispanic students before they get to 10th grade."

Former West Virginia governor and current **Alliance for Excellent Education** President **Bob Wise** said that ultimately, CTE has to prove its value to legislators. That value not only must be translated into educa-

tion, but into dollars and cents, he said.

Wise took care to note that governors like nothing better than to announce a new factory or large business opening because it means new jobs for voters. Career educators need to draw a link between CTE and improved high school graduation rates because that would be equal to announcing hundreds of new jobs and revenue for the state, he said.

"The one thing that has to stop is this food fight for educational funding," Wise said. "The president proposed some very significant high school reform initiatives this year. The problem is once again he looked to [CTE monies] to fund a lot of those initiatives."

## Justesen urges CTE data collection, activism in states

The onus of improving the status of career and technical education in the eyes of the **Education Department** and the **Bush administration** is not on any government official, but rather, rests with the educators themselves.

**Troy Justesen**, ED's assistant secretary for the **Office of Vocational and Adult Education**, told the **Association for Career and Technical Education's** membership on Monday night the best way to ensure continued federal support for CTE is through data collection.

Justesen also urged educators to take that information to their state governors to make certain Perkins money is not spent on other programs.

"I think CTE has a vital role in the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind," he said. "[The challenge] for us is to translate our anecdotal experiences and years of teaching as CTE educators ... into hardcore data. Data that proves CTE leads to higher graduation rates in this country."



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## NCLB reauthorization

# Counselors call for greater emphasis in law

By Sarah Sparks

Staff Writer

Calls for students to take more rigorous high school courses have been growing in both the **Education Department** and **Congress**, but policymakers mostly have overlooked the people who must actually implement those reforms: the school counselors.

As part of the No Child Left Behind Act's reauthorization, "They're talking about a lot of stuff that school counselors are directly involved in: dropout prevention, assessment, college readiness," said **David Hawkins**, public policy director for the **National Association for College Admission Counseling**. Yet, "there really isn't much mention of counselors in NCLB."

NACAC and the **American School Counselor Association** announced this week a push to get lawmakers to incorporate counselors more directly in school accountability plans and provide more recruiting and professional development support for counselors in high-need schools.

As high school reform moves to the forefront of reauthorization, experts worry there simply aren't enough counselors to handle the expected workload. ASCA found the ratio of students to counselors nationwide was 488 to one according to the most recent 2004 data, nearly double the recommended ratio of 250-1. In California, it reached 966 to one before legislators voted last year to hire 3,000 new

counselors. Counselors were scarcest in high-poverty, high-minority districts.

"Counselors are really just trying to keep their heads above water," Hawkins said. "What they really need is more time with students early on," he said, noting students interested in science and math fields must begin planning their course loads in middle school.

### Priorities

Among the groups' priorities:

- Amend NCLB to require counselor participation in school improvement plan development.
- Appropriate \$75 million in 2008 for the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program with a priority for high-need schools. The program cannot be used for secondary schools unless it receives at least \$40 million, and it has been flat-funded at about \$12 million since 2002.
- Include, through reauthorization of NCLB or the Higher Education Act, a national pilot program to develop and use professional development for counselors on how to guide at-risk students and their families. The program would take its cue from existing state programs such as California's Assembly Bill 1802 and Pennsylvania's Project 720.
- Pass S. 611, the Pathways for All Students to Succeed Act, sponsored by Sen. **Patty Murray**, D-Wash., which includes counselors in high school reform programs.

## NUTRITION (continued from page 1)

desserts, pastries, candy and soft drinks are part of the nation's school landscape."

Lawmakers say it is time to redefine federal nutritional values and make them applicable to all food served in schools — including vending machines.

"At this point, I am convinced that we really have to have national standards for what is occurring in hallways," said Sen. **Richard Lugar**, R-Ind.

Though food marketers eager to sell products to schools and local school boards relying on vending machines as a method of raising cash are likely to resist new federal standards, the idea is gaining traction on Capitol Hill.

### Regulating vending machines

Sen. **Tom Harkin**, D-Iowa, chairman of the Senate **Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry**, said he views the issue almost as a crisis situation. He said that if **Congress** does not act now to make schools healthier, the federal government will eventually be strapped with the excessive cost of treating the next generation's

diabetes conditions.

"We must address this problem and do what is right for the health of our kids," Harkin said.

Harkin introduced legislation Tuesday to update 30-year-old **U.S. Agriculture Department** regulations governing the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program meals and to extend their authority to regulate all foods sold in school.

He sees this year's reauthorization of the 2002 Farm Act as the perfect opportunity to extend federal guidelines.

Though Harkin unsuccessfully introduced the same bill — the Child Nutrition Promotion and School Lunch Protection Act — during the last Congress, he said his chances of enacting it have since improved. For one thing, Harkin said, he has more support this time around. Several senators, including Sens. **Lisa Murkowski**, R-Alaska, **George Voinovich**, R-Ohio, **Charles Schumer**, D-N.Y., and **Joseph Lieberman**, D-Conn., signed on as cosponsors. Reps. **Lynn Woolsey**, D-Calif., and **Christopher Shays**, R-Conn., are expected to introduce companion legislation in the **House**.

## Daily Briefing

### Across the Nation

#### New York

#### Union readies ad campaign targeting proposed increase in charter schools

The state teachers' union is preparing an advertising campaign designed to combat a plan proposed by Gov. **Eliot Spitzer** to expand the number of charter schools allowed in New York.

The **New York State United Teachers'** campaign will cost approximately \$125,000 and will target state lawmakers, who have the power to accept or reject Spitzer's plan as part of the state budget, *The New York Sun* recently reported.

The governor's proposal would raise the number of allowable charter schools in the state to 250, a 150-school jump from the 100 charter schools the **Legislature** originally approved nearly a decade ago. Spitzer's plan also includes \$15 million in transitional aid for traditional public schools whose budgets would be reduced because of the loss of students to charter schools.

A union official told the *Sun* that the union wants the state to introduce a limit that would cap charter school enrollment to 5 percent of public school students. The union also said \$15 million is not enough for transitional aid for the affected public schools.

A representative for Spitzer said the governor might consider making changes to the proposal.

### Newsmakers

#### School chiefs eye strongest teachers

The **Council of Chief State School Officers** has named the finalists for its annual Teacher of the Year award.

The finalists span the nation and the grade levels. The winner will be named at a White House ceremony April 23.

Candidates are nominated and vetted by 15 national education organizations, including CCSSO. The finalists have already been named the 2007 Teacher of the Year in their home states.

The finalists are:

- **Justin Minkel** teaches second grade at **Jones Elementary School** in Springdale, Ark.
- **Joshua Anderson** teaches speech, debate and language arts for all grades at **Olathe Northwest High School** in Olathe, Kan.
- **Tamra Tiong** teaches special education students in kindergarten through second grade at **Dulce Elementary School** in Dulce, N.M.
- **Andrea Peterson** teaches music in grades one through six at **Monte Cristo Elementary School** in Granite Falls, Wash.

### Resources

#### PBS launches site for educators

The **Public Broadcasting Service** has launched a comprehensive free Web site for elementary and secondary school teachers on ways to incorporate technology into the curriculum.

The site includes curriculum materials, educational videos, and professional development services. The site includes a new Web log, "Media Infusion," in which educators and experts can discuss best practices for technology in the classroom. Teachers can also search a database of lesson plans aligned to various state standards organized by grade, subject and topic, as well as a resource search for local education points of interest.

"The breadth of content showcased on the site will be valuable to teachers of all grade levels and subject areas," said **Mary Kadera**, PBS education vice president, in a statement.

For more information, see [www.pbs.org/teachers](http://www.pbs.org/teachers).

#### ACTE unveils best practices tool for career ed

A new Web site created by the **Association for Career and Technical Education** highlights best practices for educators in CTE.

Within the site, ACTE will feature successful secondary and postsecondary CTE programs nationwide, making special note of developing innovative education and technical programs.

The site also allows users to suggest their own best practices for inclusion.

For more information, go to [www.acteonline.org/policy/resources/bpp](http://www.acteonline.org/policy/resources/bpp).

### Funding Notebook

#### American Indian school wins tech award

The **Enemy Swim Day School**, an American Indian school in Waubay, S.D., was awarded the top prize in the **Verizon Tech Savvy Awards** for its technologically advanced native language literacy program.

The school won \$25,000 to expand its program, which incorporates parental involvement and the use of the latest forms of media technology. Teachers help American Indian parents use the Internet, digital cameras, and publishing software to write and produce children's books that will allow students to learn the Dakota language.

The awards, in their first year, also went to the following programs:

- **Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative**, Providence, R.I., for a program for parents who are learning English as a second language.
- **Iowa Central Community College**, Fort Dodge, Iowa, for a program that teaches parents to use e-mail to communicate with their children's teachers.

## Daily Briefing

- **Forrest Outreach Foundation**, Addison, Texas, for the Click-for-Success program, a computer club with classes and home visits.

- **LTSC Community Development Corporation**, Los Angeles, for the DISKovery Angelina program, which helps immigrants use the Internet to facilitate everyday necessities.

### Funding Alert

#### ED grant to fight high school alcohol abuse

**Scope:** The **Education Department** invites proposals to develop and implement innovative and effective programs to reduce alcohol abuse in secondary schools.

**Deadline:** March 26.

**Funds:** \$200,000 to \$400,000 a year each for 20 grants. The project period is three years.

**Eligibility:** Local education agencies that do not have an active grant under this program.

**Areas:** Projects must include one or more proven strategies for reducing underage alcohol abuse as determined by the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**.

**Contact:** **Amalia Cuervo**, (202) 205-2855; e-mail: [amalia.cuervo@ed.gov](mailto:amalia.cuervo@ed.gov).

**Web:** [www.ed.gov/news/fedregister/announce/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/news/fedregister/announce/index.html) (see Feb. 9).

### Legal Brief

#### Superintendent's sunshine law abuse case against district allowed to proceed

**Case name:** *Casey v. West Las Vegas Independent Sch. Dist., et al.*, 473 F.3d 1323 (10th Cir. 2007).

**Ruling:** The **10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals** allowed a former New Mexico school district superintendent to pursue her First Amendment retaliation claim after she was demoted and fired for reporting the board's failure to comply with the state's open meetings law. Because the superintendent spoke out on a matter of public importance that was unrelated to her official job duties, her speech was afforded constitutional protection.

**Summary:** A New Mexico school district faces charges that it violated its superintendent's First Amendment rights by demoting and firing her in retaliation for reporting the board's alleged wrongdoing to state officials.

The superintendent had no duty to cure or report the violations as part of her job, but did so in an attempt to ensure that the public had notice and an opportunity to comment on matters before the board.

She told the board members of the violations, and when nothing was done, reported them to the state attorney general. The AG then ordered the board to comply with the law.

## Bits & Pieces



■ **Last Leg(acy):** **President Bush** is pushing hard to reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Act before he leaves office and cement what he considers his domestic policy legacy. "I happen to think it's if not the, one of the most substantial pieces of legislation I will have had the honor to sign — I've signed a lot," Bush told educators and parents in Indiana.

■ **Bring 'em On:** Hill lawmakers are beginning to look forward to a rigorous debate on teacher effectiveness when the **Senate** eventually takes up a bill to reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Act. "I expect there will be intense, innovative, bold amendments to that act to deal with the effectiveness of teachers," said Sen. **Joseph Lieberman**, D-Conn. He also predicted that lawmakers would expand testing requirements of students' science knowledge.

■ **Marital Maneuvers:** At a recent forum on the Hill, Rep. **Pete Hoekstra**, R-Mich., talked about being surprised when his then-colleague, former Rep. **Bob Schaffer**, R-Colo., actually considered voting in favor of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001. Hoekstra said he knew how to convince Schaffer otherwise — by working through Schaffer's wife, who was against the legislation. Hoekstra said his friend quickly figured out that it was going to be "a long, cold winter in Colorado if Bob supported No Child Left Behind."

■ **Divine Intervention:** Though lawmakers have long-standing disputes about a federal forestry formula that distributed most of its school and county services funds to Oregon, one senator argues that the method was not only fair, it was divine. "The reason Oregon gets the money is because this is where God decided to put the trees — the beautiful trees," said Sen. **Ron Wyden**, R-Ore. According to the **Oregon Forestry Department**, the state's 27.5 million acres of forest land cover 45 percent of the state. More than half of those forests — 57 percent — are owned by the federal government.

■ **Fast Fact from the NCES:** In 2002–03, the 50 states and the District of Columbia spent an average of \$8,044 in current expenditures for every pupil in membership. This represents a 4.1 percent increase in current expenditures per student from the previous school year (\$7,727 in unadjusted dollars).

# Students' voices muffled when it comes to federal policy

By **Kris Kitto**

Staff Writer

With nearly every special-interest group having something to say about federal education policy these days, one sector seems lost in the debate: students.

The student voice in the federal education policymaking process is faint, education experts say, but understandably so. Incorporating student input into national K-12 legislation like the No Child Left Behind Act is difficult, they say, because of the great distance that divides the national lawmakers who determine what goes on in schools from the students who live everyday with those lawmakers' decisions.

But that doesn't mean students don't get a say in the efforts to improve the country's education system. They can often provide their insight on local and state levels, and leaders at the federal level do pay attention to surveys, statistics and other outlets for the student voice, experts say.

Further involvement between policymakers and students would be positive, though, they say.

"I think it would be good for federal officials to talk to kids about what's going on," said **Rocco Marano**, director of the **National Association of Student Councils**. However, he added, the federal policymaking process can be "so far away from what the kids deal with in the classroom [that] I'm not sure how kids would react to that."

According to **American Youth Policy Forum** Director **Betsy Brand**, one of the most

common ways for students to be heard in Washington, D.C., is through proxies like the recently released **Indiana University** report, *Voices of Students on Engagement*, which surveyed more than 81,000 students.

The better way for interaction to occur between national legislators and students, Brand said, is on a more organic level.

"I think what's more important is for individual policymakers to be in contact with young people," she said. "In some ways, it's almost a more real way."

But some question whether that individual interaction is happening.

"I don't believe, based on what I've seen, that federal policymakers are actively seeking the perspective of youth," said **Naomi Housman**, director of **The National High School Alliance** at the **Institute for Educational Leadership**. Part of the problem, she said, is that "there's no formal mechanism" for such input.

Students can be heard at the state and local levels, though, experts say. They might have a seat on school boards or could be a part of a district committee.

In Washington state, the **Legislature** has a youth advisory council that provides opinions on issues affecting students.

Housman said such formal consideration of students' perspectives is a wise way to craft education policy.

"Youth need to feel ownership of their own education," she said, "and their perspective really matters."

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## TEACHER (continued from page 1)

Advancement Program for its focus on master teachers and data-driven instruction.

With no one approach standing out, **Jon Schnur**, chief executive officer of **New Leaders for New Schools**, an urban principal recruitment program, said he preferred federal investment in more effectiveness pilot programs with strong research and evaluation components rather than full-scale effectiveness requirements.

Such efforts could generate better data on how to leverage effective teachers and principals that could inform future reauthorizations, he said.

"I really believe this is not the time for a uniform national policy around principal effectiveness," he said.

For his part, Chairman **Edward Kennedy**, D-Mass., considered the possibility of authorizing more federal incentive funding for a variety of different approaches to improve teacher recruitment, retention and effectiveness.

"My basic question is, should we try to incentivize these types of programs — all of which are sort of different — in a way that lets a thousand flowers bloom?" he asked.

Sen. Alexander, a strong proponent of systems that would reward high-quality teachers and principals, conceded there was still a lack of consensus within the education community about an equitable way to measure effectiveness. He appeared wary about mandating a single approach.

"With all respect, I don't think we in the Senate can do that," he said.

But **Amy Wilkins**, vice president of government relations and communications for the **Education Trust**, advocated more federal action. She called for greater Senate oversight of the NCLB's teacher distribution and comparability requirements and said incentive funding would only go so far to help the poorest kids.

"Aggressive experimentation that tries to move to scale very quickly is important," she said.