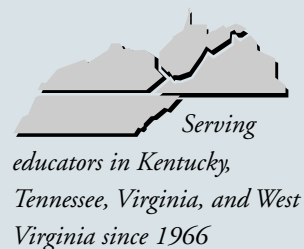


Vol. 22, No. 1

THE LINK

A PUBLICATION FOR EDUCATION PRACTITIONERS



Data Connections Helping Schools Make AYP



Months ago, a team of AEL researchers and evaluators examined *No Child Left Behind's* goal of bringing all students to a proficient level of academic achievement, as defined by the states, within the next 12 years. "We saw the goal as worthy but daunting," recalls Doris Redfield, AEL's vice president for research and director of its regional educational laboratory. "We challenged ourselves to identify the most immediately useful action we could take to help schools make adequate yearly progress toward this goal, given all that we've learned during our 36 years of providing professional development and other services to state and local educators."

The result was *Data Connections*, an interactive CD-ROM that puts teachers in the driver's seat as they use data from their own classrooms to determine what changes might make the greatest difference for their

students. The CD-ROM shows step-by-step how to analyze and interpret standardized test data, develop classroom assessments that align with standards, and plan effective instruction based on test data. It also includes tips, tools, and strategies—such as how to obtain and use state test blueprints—for preparing students to perform well on tests, a skill that could help them succeed in other arenas of life as well.

"Developing this tool for teachers has been a labor of love," says Redfield. "We wanted to create something they would feel comfortable with, so we used video segments of practicing teachers to introduce the

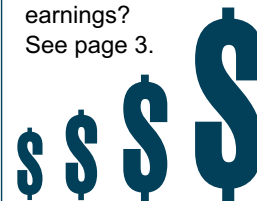
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Degrees of Difference

How much does education affect earnings?
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The Link is free to educators in the AEL region. Readers are encouraged to reproduce its contents, giving proper credit. Current and many back issues are available in PDF at www.ael.org.



Data Connections

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concepts. We wanted to introduce teachers to the wonders of spreadsheets in a nonthreatening way, so we incorporated one of the most commonly used programs, Microsoft Excel. We set out to provide a complete package, with guided practice in applying the concepts and do-it-yourself sections to allow teachers to use their own data.”

With the help of technology experts, the team succeeded. “We knew interactive technology was the best way to deliver this product, but I initially had some concerns,” admits codeveloper Kimberly Hambrick. “Teachers, like the rest of us, have varying comfort levels when it comes to technology. But I am pleased with the final product. From the moment you open the CD-ROM you really do feel that you are sitting down with well-informed colleagues who are willing to let you take things at your own pace.”

Teachers can use *Data Connections* individually or in groups. They can work through the CD-ROM’s four modules at their own pace or as needed. A reference shelf with glossary is always on hand on the CD-ROM’s “desktop,” and a companion Web site (www.dataconnections.org) features state and national standards and other up-to-date information.

In the context of *No Child Left Behind*, teachers’ capacity to collect, evaluate, and review data over time and to keep track of interventions and successes has never been more important. *Data Connections* enables them to monitor the progress of individual students or groups of students throughout the school year and to adjust instructional strategies accordingly.

The stakes are high. Schools are specifically required to make annual, incremental increases in the percentage of students from various subgroups who achieve proficiency—or to take corrective actions that range from restructuring the school’s internal organization to replacing curriculum or even school staff members.

But states are also to establish a program that awards schools and teachers who (1) significantly reduce achievement gaps that involve subgroups of students—those who are economically disadvantaged, members of major racial and ethnic groups, living with a disability, or speaking a native language other than English; or (2) exceed what the state defines as “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) for two consecutive years.

“Of course, the greatest reward for teachers—and for us as developers of this tool—is student success,” says Redfield.

For ordering information, see the order form/insert in the center of this issue of *The Link*.

AEL is the first education institution in the world to use Digimarc MediaBridge technology, which employs digital watermarks to instantly link printed materials with the World Wide Web. You can recognize an Internet-enabled page by the symbol you see at the right and in the blue bar below.

Most pages of *The Link* contain an image (a star) embedded with a Digimarc. When you hold the star up to a digital camera connected to your desktop computer, the Digimarc software reads the watermark, activates your Web browser, and delivers AEL’s Web site to your screen. From there, you will be able to launch related Web sites and access a wealth of information—without typing long URLs. To join us in exploring this evolutionary technology, go to www.digimarc.com to download and install the free Digimarc MediaBridge software. This technology promises to expand the way we read and use printed materials.



Degrees of Difference: Education Pays Off

Motivating a middle schooler. Stopping senioritis. Lobbying a legislator. Recent reports from the U.S. Census Bureau and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) can provide support for all three.

In July 2002, the Census Bureau released a special study, *The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings*. Its findings clearly demonstrate the economic advantages of getting a formal education, as you can see in graphic representations throughout this issue of *The Link*.

The Big Picture

Over an adult working life, high school graduates can expect, on average, to earn \$1.2 million; those with a bachelor's degree, \$2.1 million; and people with a master's degree, \$2.5 million. People with doctoral (\$3.4 million) and professional degrees (\$4.4 million) do even better. These estimates are based on 1999 earnings projected over a typical work life, defined as the 40 years from age 25 through age 64.

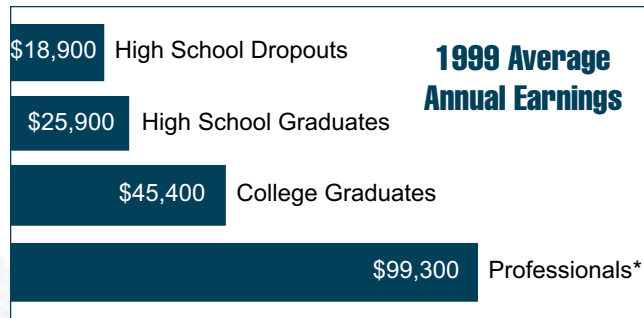
Those who never complete their high school or higher education degrees can expect lower incomes and are less likely to find full-time, year-round employment.

Good News

Currently, according to the Census Bureau, almost 90% of young adults graduate from high school and about 60% of high school seniors go on to college the following year. In 2000, 84% of American adults age 25 and over had at least completed high school and 26% had a bachelor's degree or higher, both all-time highs.

Earnings Inequities

Women with professional degrees may expect to cumulatively earn almost \$2 million less than their male counterparts over their work lives. Also, while going beyond high school to get a bachelor's degree may increase a White worker's earnings by about



*Includes those who hold degrees as medical doctors, dentists, lawyers, and veterinarians.

Source: *The Big Payoff*, a 2002 report from the U.S. Census Bureau.

\$1 million, that degree will be worth about \$700,000 to an African American, Asian, Pacific Islander, or Hispanic worker.

A report released last year, *What's It Worth? Field of Training and Economic Status: 1996*, said among people with bachelor's degrees, those working full time in engineering earned the highest average monthly pay (\$4,680), while those with education degrees earned the lowest (\$2,802) in 1996.

Access Inequities

In its July 2002 *Issue Brief: Vocational Education Offerings in Rural High Schools*, NCES examined vocational education offerings in rural, suburban, and urban schools. NCES surveyed both comprehensive and vocational high schools to determine how many offered courses and/or programs in 28 occupations. From the 28, 10 were identified as fast growing, including 3 computer-related fields.

The survey found that rural schools were less likely than schools in other areas to offer vocational education programs for the 10 fast-growing occupations. Although this might reflect differences in local labor markets, it could be an area for concern.

Sources

- *The Big Payoff* is at www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p23-210.pdf.
- *What's It Worth?* is at www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/fld-of-trn.html.
- *Vocational Education Offerings* is at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2002120>.



Resources of Interest

Department of Education Newsletter

The Achiever is a free, biweekly newsletter published by the U.S. Department of Education to spread the word about *No Child Left Behind*. Available to every parent, teacher, education leader, and taxpayer, the newsletter includes news and articles about education reform, tips for parents and teachers, and resources.

The Achiever is available in print and electronic formats. To sign up, go to www.NoChildLeftBehind.gov/subscribe.html.

Making Technology Pay

Computer-based technology is a means, not an end. Yet, many schools and districts invest time and money in acquiring technology without clarifying their goals for using this important tool. This Knowledge Brief from WestEd's Regional Technology in Education Consortium, *Getting the Most from Technology in Schools*, is for educators and policymakers who want to know how to make the most of their investments in computer-based technology. The brief draws on recent research on technology use in schools to address the question, Under what conditions does this technology have the most benefits for students? It summarizes lessons for developing effective technology plans. Find the brief online at www.wested.org/cs/wew/view/rs/665.

Using Handheld Computers

With demand for handheld computers running high and classroom expertise in short supply, a how-to book from the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) should be useful. *Palm Handheld Computers—A Complete Resource for Classroom Teachers* is designed to help teachers integrate Palm handheld computers into the classroom. The authors are educators, researchers, and experts in working out how to use, manage, and integrate handhelds into standards-based K-12 curricula. This practical guide includes a technology overview of handhelds, lesson plans, assessment resources, and tips and templates for managing student use. The book also provides advice on finding and evaluating educational software and accessories.

The book (\$31.45 for ISTE members, \$34.95 for nonmembers) comes with study guides and a CD-ROM of Palm OS freeware programs developed at the University of Michigan's Center for Highly Interactive Computing in Education. The freeware study guides are available separately as a companion booklet for students (\$9 for ISTE members, \$10 for nonmembers) and

do not include the CD-ROM. For more information or to order, visit www.iste.org/bookstore.

Best Web Sites for Teachers

The fifth edition of *The Best Web Sites for Teachers* is now available from the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). Listing more than 1,200 active Web sites, the book helps busy teachers, library media specialists, technology coordinators, and parents find sites that are reliable, safe, and educationally rich.

This edition features more than 600 new sites, many of which include lesson plans. Browser information has been updated, and new lists were added for multicultural and special needs students. The authors include forms for evaluating and creating customized lists of Web sites and explain how to use the two most popular browsers to best advantage.

Find the table of contents and an excerpt on bilingual site resources at www.iste.org/bookstore. The book can be purchased online (\$31.45 for ISTE members, \$34.95 for nonmembers).

Educational Technology: A Big Picture

Technologies for Education: Potential, Parameters and Prospects was recently released by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and The Academy for Educational Development (AED). The book addresses the question of how to harvest the power of technology to make education relevant; responsive; and effective for anyone, anywhere, anytime.

Drawing on a wealth of worldwide knowledge and experience, this book outlines the rationales and realities of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for education, examines options and choices for applying them, and summarizes case studies that illustrate ways of integrating ICTs into learning systems in different settings.

A PDF version of the book is free on



the AED Web site; to read or download, go to www.aed.org/publications/TechEdInfo.html. Single print copies are free and may be requested by e-mailing pubsinfo@aed.org.

Defining the Quality of Classroom Assignments

The National Center for Research in Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) has been researching a method for investigating the quality of student learning environments, and developing criteria for rating teachers' assignments and student work.

A summary of CRESST indicators and a rubric for judging the quality of assignments are presented in Volume 1, Number 2 of *Vision Magazine* from the regional educational laboratory at SERVE. See the article titled "Taking a Close Look at the Quality of Teachers' Assignments and Student Work" by Lindsay Clare Matsumura. Get the electronic version free at www.serve.org/publications/vision.htm or phone 800-755-3277 to get a print version.

Science E-letter

Science Class is the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) monthly electronic newsletter for science educators. Every month, *Science Class* features a curriculum topic that is supported by a range of NSTA-approved teaching resources: news stories, Internet "SciLinks," NSTA journal articles (sorted by grade range), books, and more. In addition, every issue includes a column on professional development, as well as NSTA news highlights. To subscribe, go to www.nsta.org.

Math E-letter

Have you ever wondered if anyone cares about teaching and learning mathematics in rural schools? If so, the *Rural Mathematics Educator* is a new online newsletter that might interest you. It points to useful math education resources with a rural perspective always in mind.

The newsletter is a project of the Appalachian Collaborative Center for Learning, Assessment, and Instruction in Mathematics (ACCLAIM), one of seven such organizations funded by the National Science Foundation. To be notified as new issues are published, visit the ACCLAIM Web site at <http://kant.citl.ohiou.edu/ACCLAIM/index.htm> and provide your contact information.

Audio Textbooks

Students who are visually impaired or who have severe learning disabilities can have access to the contents of textbooks and other educational materials through digitally recorded textbooks on CD from Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic (RFB&D). For more than 50 years this nonprofit has served as an educational library for students who are blind, visually impaired, or have learning disabilities such as dyslexia.

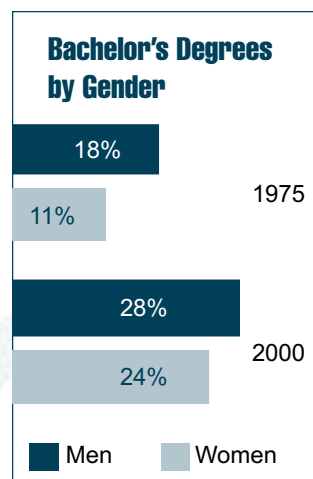
Students listen to the digitally recorded textbooks on specially equipped portable CD players or on standard multimedia computers with specialized software. Playback hardware and software are available through RFB&D for nonprofit sale. Individual and institutional memberships are available, with prices ranging from \$75 to \$800 per year, depending on the number of users.

For more information, visit www.rfbd.org or phone 866-RFBD-585.

Exploring Racial Inequities

A new book from the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University and the Harvard Education Press explores the inequities experienced by minority schoolchildren in special education. Minority children, especially African Americans, are far more likely than White children to be designated mentally retarded or emotionally disturbed and therefore in need of special education. Even when appropriately designated, these children often receive poorer services than their White peers.

(continued on page 6)



Among people ages 25 and older, the percentage of men and women with a bachelor's degree has increased sharply, with women narrowing the gap. See "Degrees of Difference" on page 3.

Source: *The Big Payoff*, a 2002 report from the U.S. Census Bureau.



Resources of Interest

(continued from page 5)

Scientific Research in Education

Recent federal legislation, such as the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* and related policy initiatives, has focused the attention of policymakers, researchers, and practitioners on the nature and value of “scientific” research in education. In the November issue of *Educational Researcher*, eight scholars representing a broad range of approaches in education research discuss key issues and what constitutes rigorous research in education. Read their articles at www.aera.net/pubs/er/eronline.htm.

Racial Inequity in Special Education, edited by Daniel J. Losen and Gary Orfield, describes the scope of these problems and provides a comprehensive review of attempts to address complex issues. This book sets the stage for a more fruitful discussion that might advance racial equity in both special and general education.

The hardcover edition of this 336-page book costs \$59.95 and the paperback edition is \$28.95. To order, phone 617-495-3432. To read the foreword and introduction online, go to <http://gseweb.harvard.edu/hepg/racialinequity.html#toc>.

Leave No Family Behind

The National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University, directed by Dr. Joyce L. Epstein, assists schools, districts, and state departments of education in meeting requirements of the *No Child Left Behind* law. NNPS provides manuals and other resources, evaluation opportunities, and ongoing professional development for strengthening and maintaining school, family, and community partnerships. The NNPS Web site features summaries of four new requirements for reporting test scores to parents and the public; changing from failing to better schools; providing supplementary services; and reporting to the public on school status, progress, and trends. Visit www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/nochild.htm.

How to “Stop Faking It”

What do a pair of scissors and a bottle opener have in common? Believe it or not, the question has to do with the topic of energy. The answer can be found in *Stop Faking It!: Finally Understand Science So You Can Teach It: Energy*. This book, which can serve as an introductory or refresher course in the physics of energy, is now available from NSTA Press, the publishing arm of the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA).

The book is written for science teachers, home schoolers, and parents who

want to understand the science basics and principles in order to teach physical science with confidence. The material is suitable for anyone teaching elementary through middle school students.

The book offers easy-to-grasp explanations of energy basics, including kinetic energy, potential energy, and the transformation of energy. It covers energy as it relates to simple machines, thermal energy, temperature, and heat transfer. Using common household objects, the book’s activities make difficult concepts easy to understand. Educators can use fingernail clippers, for example, to help learners understand simple machines. Each chapter ends with a summary and an application section that features more practical examples, such as using roller coasters to explain energy transformations.

This book is the second in the NSTA Press *Stop Faking It* series; the first book demystifies force and motion. Both books include glossaries and link to up-to-date Web content through NSTA’s SciLinks program.

Stop Faking It!: Energy is available from the NSTA Science Store at <http://store.nsta.org/> or by calling 800-277-5300. The 106-page book costs \$15.95 (stock #PB169X1; ISBN 0-87355-214-8; 20% discount to NSTA members).

Connect to the Middle East

The tensions between Israel and Palestine and the United States’ relationship with Iraq make it important for children to learn about the culture that shapes life in that region of the world. In response, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting funded the development of a new Web resource called Global Connections. This site provides a wealth of resources to help students better understand the cultural differences that exist between Middle Eastern nations and the Western world. Students can explore the region’s rich history, from the fall of the Ottoman Empire to political structures of the present day.

(continued on page 7)



The site also contains teaching resources for addressing common stereotypes, answering geographical questions, and spurring discussion about U.S. foreign policy. Available lesson plans provide suggestions for teachers on how to incorporate current events news and related history lessons into the classroom. To visit, go to www.pbs.org/globalconnections.

Teaching and Assessing Reading Skills

Teachers and parents alike can appreciate and use this research-based framework that presents the cognitive foundations for learning to read.

Created by researchers at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL), the framework of reading acquisition was created as the centerpiece of a suite of tools designed to help K–2 reading teachers develop and use effective instructional strategies.

The framework depicts the cognitive steps that lead to two equally important competencies—language comprehension and decoding—and result in reading comprehension.

Most of the tools and resources related to the framework are available free on SEDL's Web site, and a print version with companion CD-ROM can be purchased. The developers recommend the online version, however, for its interactivity (the ability to search, for example).

A user enters the Web version through the A-shaped graphical representation of the framework and can then choose from five “pathways”: (1) information about each cognitive element and the research related to it, (2) information about assessment techniques and the searchable database of more than 125 reading assessment tools suitable for use with PreK–3 students, (3) a database of activity ideas that support the cognitive elements, (4) a bibliography of research articles related to the elements, and (5) information about how the elements relate to

the benchmarks and standards for the Southwestern states in SEDL's region.

A useful companion piece to the reading framework is the December 2002 issue of *SEDL Letter*, which addresses reading topics with articles such as “Ten Myths of Reading Instruction” and “Making Every Teacher a Reading Teacher.” It is available free online at www.sedl.org/pubs/sedletter.

To purchase the print version of the framework (\$15), go to www.sedl.org/pubs. To use the reading framework online, go to www.sedl.org/reading/framework. The reading assessment database is at www.sedl.org/reading/rad.

Learn Sign Language Online

Signing Online, LLC, has launched a new learning Web site that brings sign language education to anyone with an Internet connection. The site contains a series of four American Sign Language (ASL) courses that teach the basic skills to become fluent in signing. Once people have successfully completed the courses, they will be able to carry on a conversation and understand the basics of ASL grammar.

The interactive courses, which cost about \$50 each, or less if you take more than one, are designed for parents and friends of deaf and hard-of-hearing people, workers from service industries who want to serve their customers better, professionals such as social workers, home schoolers who are interested in learning a new language, and the millions of people who are simply curious about American Sign Language. Learn more at www.signingonline.com.

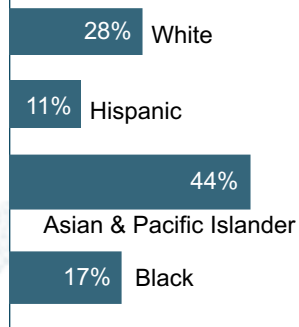
Celebrate Poetry

April is National Poetry Month, and HarperCollins has prepared a special Classroom Poetry Kit based on the works of Shel Silverstein. Many of the activities are free online at www.harperchildrens.com/hch/fiction/features/poetry/shel. Teachers can get more information and order the complete kit by phoning 800-331-3761.

Resources of Interest

(continued from page 6)

Bachelor's Degrees by Ethnicity, 2000



Among people ages 25 and older, educational attainment differs significantly by race and Hispanic origin. See “Degrees of Difference” on page 3.

Source: *The Big Payoff*, a 2002 report from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Grant Opportunities

For information on grant programs, funding sources, and technology funding, visit the eSchool News School Funding Center at www.eschoolnews.com/resources/funding.

Consider also watching the Federal Register, published every weekday, at www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreglfrcont01.html.

Help with Resources

NetDayCompass lists more than 1,300 resources to help schools assess their technology needs, capabilities, and use. These include a section on grants and funding to help schools obtain hardware, software, professional development, and more. Visit the site at www.netdaycompass.org.

Federal Programs

NASA: Explorer Schools

Purpose: To bring exciting opportunities to educators, students, and families through sustained professional development, student learning opportunities, and integration of technology.

In this program, administered by the National Science Teachers Association, educator teams, working with NASA personnel and other partners, will develop and implement action plans for staff and students. These plans will promote and support the use of NASA content and programs that address the teams' local needs in mathematics, science, and technology through authentic experiences. Educators and students will become involved in NASA research, discoveries, and missions through NASA learning adventures and scientific challenges. During the 2003 pilot year, the program will focus on grade levels 5 to 8.

Explorer School educator teams (four to five people) will attend a one-week, all-expenses-paid professional development program at one of the 10 NASA Field Centers during July 2003. Educators will receive a \$500 stipend for the summer 2003 workshop and a \$500 stipend for implementing the team's action plan during the 2003-2004 school year. Graduate or professional development credits are available.

School benefits include being identified as a NASA Explorer School, partnering with NASA to improve student learning, receiving grants up to \$10,000 to assist with the implementation of the action plan, and developing associations with professional organizations that support professional development.

Deadline: April 4

Information and application available online at <http://explorerschools.nasa.gov>.

Foundations

National Science Foundation: Robert Noyce Scholarships

Purpose: To encourage talented science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) majors and professionals to become K-12 mathematics and science teachers.

The program provides funds to institutions of higher education to support scholarships, stipends, and programs for students who commit to teaching in high-need K-12 schools. Scholarship amounts must be at least \$7,500 per year and no more than \$10,000. One-year stipends of \$10,000 help to support STEM professionals who enroll in a teacher certification program.

Deadline: May 16

More information available online at www.nsf.gov/pubs/2003/nsf03544/nsf03544.htm.

Beaumont Foundation of America: Technology Grants

Purpose: To enrich the lives of individuals by providing technology to historically underserved schools and communities.

The foundation grants Toshiba hardware under three distinct programs: individual, schools, and community.

Deadline: March 31

Information and application available online at www.bmtfoundation.com.

Laura Bush Foundation for America's Libraries: Grants

Purpose: To help children connect with books by enhancing the book collections of school libraries.

More information available online at www.laurabushfoundation.org or by contacting Meg Pearson at 202-955-5890.



Captain Planet Foundation

Purpose: To encourage innovative programs that empower children and youth to work individually and collectively to solve environmental problems in their neighborhoods and communities.

All projects must

- promote understanding of environmental issues
- focus on hands-on involvement
- involve children and young adults (elementary through high school)
- promote interaction and cooperation within the group
- help young people develop planning and problem-solving skills
- include adult supervision
- commit to follow-up communication with the foundation

Funding generally ranges from \$250 to \$2,500.

Deadline: Proposals will be accepted beginning March 31.

Application and information available online at www.captainplanetfdn.org or from Captain Planet Foundation, One CNN Center, Suite 1090, Atlanta, GA 30303.

National Education Association: National Foundation for the Improvement of Education Grants

Purpose: To fund classroom innovations or professional development for improved practice in K-12 schools and higher education institutions.

Innovation Grants support collaborative efforts by two or more colleagues to develop and implement creative and unique ideas that result in high student achievement. Up to 150 Innovation Grants (\$2,000) are awarded each year, with preference given to applicants who serve economically disadvantaged students.

Learning & Leadership Grants support individual participation in high-quality professional development (\$1,000) or organization of a collegial study group (\$3,000) that leads to improvement in practice, curriculum, and student achievement. Up to 75 Leadership & Learning Grants are awarded, each to fund activities for 12 months from date of award.

Deadline: Open

Application and information available by mail from The NEA Foundation, 1201 Sixteenth Street, NW, Suite 416, Washington, DC 20036-3207 and online at www.nfie.org/programs/howtoapply.htm.

Other

Intergraph Mapping and GIS Solutions: GeoMedia Education Grants and Best Practices Awards

Purpose: To recognize innovative teaching that advances the use of geographic information system (GIS) software in the classroom.

To obtain an Education Grant, K-12 schools submit lesson plans detailing how GeoMedia software would be used. After receipt and review, the software is awarded.

Best Practices Awards recognize educators for innovative use of GeoMedia technology. First-place winners receive \$1,000 and a trip to the GeoSpatial World Conference in May. Second- and third-place winners receive smaller cash awards and free registration for the conference.

Deadline: March 31 for Best Practices Award; Open for Education Grants
Application and information available online at www.intergraph.com/gis/education/edgrants.asp.

Product Philanthropy

Gifts In Kind

International donates products and services to charities and schools and also provides nonprofits with discount programs. Program categories include technology; community service; community building; and youth, education, and sports.

Under technology, for example, are many companies offering computer hardware and software, office supplies and equipment, document delivery services (fax and e-mail), technology training, Web design, technology planning, and more.

Educational institutions may also register for Gifts In Kind—skilled volunteers who provide their time and expertise.

Find the full global resource directory at www.giftsinkind.org and register your school or nonprofit organization.

Research Notes

The U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences funds research through regional laboratories, national centers, and field studies.

Research from the nation's 10 regional laboratories can be found on the Internet at www.relnetwork.org.

The work of the 12 national centers is available at <http://research.cse.ucla.edu>.

Need Research Info? Look Here

Do you consume, or create, education research? If so, you might check out the Public Knowledge Project (PKP) at the University of British Columbia. This initiative seeks to improve the scholarly and public quality of academic research through innovative online environments.

PKP provides open systems and prototype Web sites for collecting and indexing journal articles, conference proceedings, and the like. Learn more at <http://pkp.ubc.ca>.

Improve by Moving Instruction to Center Stage

The Consortium on Chicago School Research has conducted several studies in an effort to identify why some Chicago schools are improving while most are not. A survey of consortium reports, written by David T. Gordon and published in the *Harvard Education Letter*, summarizes six characteristics—all focused on instruction—of schools that are showing marked improvement.

1. **A coherent instructional program**, based on a common framework for learning, gives shape to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The researchers note that coherence does not require “heavy-handed leadership” and likely benefits from mixing top-down and bottom-up strategies.
2. **Challenging instruction**, using high-quality assignments and “authentic intellectual work,” results in higher-than-average scores, even for students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds.
3. **Keeping pace in instruction**, by building on previous learning rather than repeating the same exercises grade after grade, helps students achieve at grade level.
4. **Bolstering instruction with adequate social supports**, such as tutoring and good relationships with teachers, helps students reach full potential.
5. **Emphasizing interactive teaching**—hands-on activities, high-level discussions, inquiry-based projects—can help students outpace their peers who experience didactic teaching methods.
6. **Using effective professional development to upgrade instruction**—where teachers reflect in an organized way, assess student work together, share resources, and build a sense of collective responsibility for student success—might be the key element that makes or breaks reform, say consortium researchers.

To read more about the studies, visit www.edletter.org/past/issues/2002-so/instruction.shtml. The article provides a link to the consortium Web site, where the full reports are available. Or, contact the Consortium on Chicago School Research, 1313 E. 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637.

The Importance of After School

A report on the Extended-Service Schools (ESS) Initiative, a program of the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds, provides findings from a multiyear evaluation study. ESS supported the creation of 60 after-school programs in 20 communities around the country. Each community adapted one of four models that were successfully developed and implemented elsewhere.

The models—the Beacon, Bridges to Success, Community Schools, and the West Philadelphia Improvement Corporation—all promote academic and nonacademic development of young people during out-of-school hours. Although their organizational structures and management differ, they all operate in school buildings; involve partnerships between community-based organizations (and/or universities) and schools; offer a range of activities, including academic and enrichment activities, and sports and recreation; and put financial resources under the control of the partnering organization.

To answer their central questions, researchers focused on programs in 10 schools in six cities. Here are summaries of key findings.

Who participated?

- Demand was substantial. Of the 10 programs studied, 8 felt they were operating at capacity by the second year.
- On average, students participated in ESS for 20 days in a semester and attended two days a week, which might suggest little opportunity for impact. However, most participated for two or more semesters, suggesting a cumulative effect.



- Higher-needs students and older youth were more difficult to attract and retain.
- Programs that required registration for a greater number of days per week could more intensively serve participants but served fewer students overall.

What was the quality of the activities?

- ESS activities were generally well designed and well implemented. The enrichment activities fostered strong adult-youth relationships, provided opportunities for cooperative peer interaction and collaborative learning, and promoted decision-making and leadership skills.
- It was not the topic or skill being addressed but the ability of the staff member leading the session that was the key to high-quality activities. Interest was most sustained when leaders could create a positive social environment and a supportive but challenging intellectual environment. It did not seem to matter whether the leader was from a community-based organization or was a teacher.

What were the benefits to participants?

- Program participation was associated with behavior that could help youth stay out of trouble. Participants reported less often that they had started drinking alcohol and said more often that they handled anger in socially appropriate ways.
- Participation was associated with positive effects on school attitudes and behaviors, but it is too early to know about impact on achievement. Youth reported doing better in school and attending more often; parent surveys agreed that ESS helped children make new friends, stay out of trouble, and like school more.

How much did the programs cost?

- The costs were reasonable but varied considerably. On average, the programs cost \$150,000 per school year (excluding use of space) to serve 63 youth a day. The daily cost per youth averaged \$15.
- Schools and school districts were essential

sources of support. They contributed, on average, more than 20% of the costs, including some or all of transportation, custodial assistance, and snacks. This was in addition to free use of the building.

- About 60% of the budget needs were funded by cash grants. Promising strategies for sustaining programs include having strong lead agencies for whom the initiative fits a need, and developing strong partnerships with other providers and funders.

Multiple Choices After School: Findings from the Extended-Service Schools Initiative by Jean Baldwin Grossman, Marilyn L. Price, Veronica Fellerath, and colleagues was published in June 2002 and is available at www.wallacefunds.org.

How Technology Supports Learning, Continued

(See *The Link* Volume 21, Number 3, Fall 2002, for a related story.)

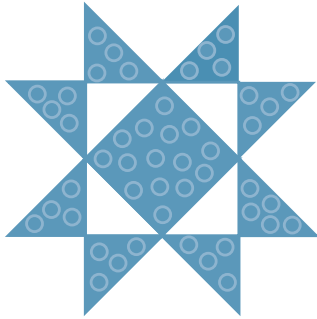
The Early Childhood Institute of Mississippi State University recently released results of a study designed “to investigate the effect of the *Between the Lions* series on the acquisition of early learning skills of children in low-income communities and children who may speak English as a second language.” Findings showed that children who watched the PBS television series regularly, and whose teachers used related activities, significantly outperformed nonviewers on tests of ability to match letters and sounds, awareness that words are made up of sounds, and knowledge of other concepts of print.

Students in Head Start, kindergarten, and first grade watched two 30-minute episodes a week and teachers received training in how to use related children’s literature and other resources to reinforce the TV lessons. Copies of the study and more information about the program, along with related activities and materials, are available online at www.pbskids.org/lions.

Starting an After-School Program

Several organizations and programs devoted to quality after-school programs can help a community get started.

- The 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program provides state grants for expanding enrichment opportunities for children attending low-performing schools. Visit www.ed.gov/21stccclc or phone 800-USA-LEARN.
- The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit dedicated to raising awareness of and advocating for quality, affordable, after-school programs. It offers policy news, program tools, and more. Visit www.afterschoolalliance.org or phone 202-296-9378.
- Afterschool.gov is an online gateway to federal resources that support children and youth during out-of-school hours. It provides many resources, including grant information, a list of promising practices, and links to enriching activities. Visit www.afterschool.gov.



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To register or find out more, contact Shirley Keene (e-mail keenes@ael.org, phone 800-624-9120 or 304-347-0420), or visit www.ael.org/page2.htm?&index+515&pd=2&pv=x.

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