

From: Smith, Kevin
Sent time: Monday, November 14, 2011 11:34:16 AM
To: Cari Miller (Cari@excelined.org) <Cari@excelined.org>; elefsky@cfl.rr.com; Tart, Suzanne; Lee, Laurie; Colle, Hope; Walt Griffin <walt_griffin@scps.k12.fl.us>
Subject: FW: 11-11-11 through 11-14-11 Education Round-Up

FYI – have a great day!

Sincerely,

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From: Higgins, Deborah
Sent: Monday, November 14, 2011 10:47 AM
Subject: 11-11-11 through 11-14-11 Education Round-Up

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



[Lawmakers: Education law changes hurt minorities](#)

(Associated Press © 11/14/2011)

WASHINGTON (AP) — Minority lawmakers say proposals in Congress to rewrite the education law No Child Left Behind fail to protect minority and disabled students and those for whom English is a second language. Black, Hispanic and Asian Pacific American members of Congress say the law should include federal accountability standards, better data collection, graduation goals and improved opportunit...

[Dental school plans withdrawn](#)
(Central Florida Future © 11/14/2011)

The UCF administration has withdrawn its proposal for a dental school after meeting opposition from the state university system's Board of Governors. The proposal, which was initially turned down by the Board of Governors this past September, was revised and to be voted upon last week. On Nov. 8, however, UCF revoked its dental school plans. "We have asked that the Board of Governors withdraw ...

[Fight attrition in STEM field](#)

(Central Florida Future © 11/14/2011)

Florida's public universities have decided to engage in a robust debate during the next two months over how to increase the number of graduates in high-tech fields, according to the Orlando Sentinel. Several proposals are being considered, such as asking the state to change its Bright Futures program to steer more money toward science, technology, engineering and math majors. One particular prop...

[Laura Bush believes in the importance of education](#)

(Charleston Gazette © 11/14/2011)

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Many little boys and girls dream of being the president or first lady (or maybe even the future first man). Is it really as luxurious as it seems, though? Sure, they get to live in a big white house, but the job is tough. Former First Lady Laura Bush was in Charleston on Wednesday for the West Virginia Education Alliance annual dinner at the Clay Center. I had the honor of...

[Tough Questions on Changing Teacher Evaluations](#)

(Chicago Tribune © 11/14/2011)

For the first time next year, thousands of Chicago Public Schools teachers will be evaluated based partly on how well their students are doing academically. Many fear they will face dismissal if the standards are not applied fairly. "It's going to make people really angry," said Ruth Resnick, a librarian at O'Keefe Elementary School, who spoke last week at a public forum about carrying out a n...

[China continues to fuel growth among international students](#)

(CommunityCollegeTimes © 11/14/2011)

International student enrollment in U.S. colleges and universities increased by 5 percent in 2010-11, according to the annual report from the Institute of International Education (IIE) released today. IIE's 2011 Open Doors counts 723,277 foreign students in the U.S., a record number, with once again students from China contributing the most to the increase. Nearly 158,000 Chinese students atten...

[Rough Path Seen for Senate's ESEA Bill](#)

(Education Week © 11/14/2011)

The prospects for a bipartisan, comprehensive rewrite of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act moving through Congress this session remain cloudy, even after a hearing on a bill that was intended to serve as a prerequisite for sending it to the floor of the U.S. Senate. During the Nov. 8 hearing before the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, Republicans continued to ex...

[Virtual Education Sees Shift to Accountability](#)

(Education Week/Digital Education Blog © 11/14/2011)

Virtual schooling is in the era of a fundamental shift in its development that should be embraced, not feared, said authors and sponsors of the 2011 version of the Keeping Pace annual report on virtual schooling here at the Virtual School Symposium in Indianapolis Thursday. While most virtual school advocates in the past may have focused on gaining exposure for their programs, they should shift...

[Unsigned contract on school agenda](#)

(Florida Keys Keysnews © 11/14/2011)

Monroe County School Board policy requires that the board sign off on all contracts in excess of \$25,000. That didn't happen in the case of a contract for software that administrators started using in November 2010 - six months before the School Board approved the contract. The district racked up more than \$200,000 in charges between November 2010 and May 2011, when the board final...

[Proposed FCAT changes could dramatically impact school grades](#)

(Florida Times-Union © 11/14/2011)

Proposed achievement levels for the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test would dramatically change school grades in the state, potentially tripling the number of F schools while providing a more gradual increase in difficulty as students matriculate. The proposal would give Florida the most rigorous state exam in the country, said Duval County Public Schools Superintendent Ed Pratt-Dannals, who...

[Board of Governors approves market-rate tuition for master's program, dental expansion proposal not passed](#)

(Independent Florida Alligator © 11/14/2011)

Erin Jester, Alligator Writer The Independent Florida Alligator | 0 comments UF administrators experienced success and frustration during the Board of Governors meeting Thursday in Boca Raton. Market-rate tuition for three new online master's programs was approved in a committee meeting Wednesday and passed by the Board on Thursday. Although the concept of a collaborative effort with Florida A&M ...

[P.E. Teacher Gets Joy From Inspiring Students to Fitness](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 11/14/2011)

LAKELAND | Stacy Bradley is addicted to physical fitness. Enlarge Stacy Bradley, P.E. coach at South McKeel Academy in Lakeland, works hard to inspire students and family members to better physical fitness. ERNST PETERS | THE LEDGER Facts S...

[USF Split Issue Puts Spotlight on Florida University System's Board of Governors](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 11/14/2011)

LAKELAND -- They are the State University System of Florida Board of Governors, and they make decisions about education that have a great impact on Floridians but they are nowhere near as well-known as the Legislative governors. Facts The Florida Board of Governors was created in 2003 to centralize the administration of the State University...

[USF Poly Given Path to Independence](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 11/14/2011)

BOCA RATON | Will the University of South Florida Polytechnic become an independent state university? If a lot of specific things happen — yes. Eventually. That's the sum of what happened Wednesday night, when the State University System Florida Board of Governors voted 13-3 to approve the "concept" of independence for the Lakeland campus if several key conditions are met. The decision w...

[Rep. Wasserman Schultz and Broward schools chief Robert Runcie to speak on Obama jobs bill](#)

(Miami Herald © 11/14/2011)

Broward Superintendent Robert Runcie and Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz are scheduled to host a press conference Monday morning to discuss their support for President Obama's jobs bill. Under the bill, Florida would receive \$1.28 billion in K-12 education funding to hire teachers and upgrade aging schools. The money is part of the overall \$447 billion national jobs package that inclu...

[Naples pension plan changes add up to \\$100 million savings over 30 years](#)

(Naples Daily News © 11/14/2011)

NAPLES — The savings — more than \$100 million over 30 years — is substantial. But while Naples officials said negotiated changes to the city's pensions plans will have that significant of an effect on the city's coffers, officials in Collier and Lee counties said the savings aren't the norm. Instead, local government officials said they haven't been as lucky as they tackle the ever-growing pensio...

[Manatee Middle program gives students the business skills to succeed](#)

(Naples Daily News © 11/14/2011)

Education leaders have called for businesses to invest in an interest in education. And businesses have asked that schools better prepare students for real-life careers. So Roberta Harris, a teacher and leader for the Manatee Middle Future Business Leaders Club, arranged for her 23 seventh- and eighth-grade students to see first hand how a business works. NAPLES — Hands shot up in the air ...

[Collier schools case could push Florida Supreme Court to better define 'education record'](#)

(Naples Daily News © 11/14/2011)

NAPLES — The American Civil Liberties Union of Florida calls it a "quibble" over two words: education records. But the Collier County School Board maintains it must protect students' rights to privacy under federal and state laws — or face the loss of federal education dollars. What began as a legal battle to obtain details about how school officials dealt with 10 North Naples Middle School stud...

[3 cheaper alternatives to Florida Prepaid's \\$50K plan for a university education](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 11/14/2011)

Parents wanting to enroll their baby in the Florida Prepaid plan face paying a mind-boggling \$49,293 for four years tuition at a public university — or \$298 a month until the October before the child graduates from high school. That's more than triple what parents paid just four years ago. Florida Prepaid administrators blame it on a law that allows public universities to make hefty incre...

[UCF College of Education outfits students for success](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 11/14/2011)

Allison Olcsvay Special to the Sentinel, UCF Student Advertisement In this weakened economy, college students can sometimes bear a heavy burden when it comes to entering the professional world. The University of Central Florida College of Education has found a way to lessen that burden in a creative way. Students in need of interview or professional attire can shop for free in the n...

[Video: Editorial Board interview with FL's Education Commissioner Gerard Robinson](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 11/14/2011)

The editorial board meeting....

[Washington-area schools confront the 'gifted gap'](#)

(Orlando-WFTV (ABC) © 11/14/2011)

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The budding scholars in Alexandria's gifted classes are bright and curious enough to make any teacher beam, but these days they're also an emblem of what the school system calls one of its greatest failures: a lack of diversity among the academic elite. Most of the city's students are black or Hispanic. Most in gifted programs are white. This imbalance in classes tailor...

[Some Palm Beach County principals receiving poor, failing grades from teachers](#)

(Palm Beach Post © 11/14/2011)

For parents, a school's annual grade from the state often tells a lot about the quality of education on campus. Before choosing a school for her two children, "The first thing I looked at were the letter grades," said Debbie Covitz, a Boca Raton mother of students in the fifth and eighth grades. But much less-publicized are report cards for principals issued by the Palm Beach County Classro...

[Reaction is mixed to requiring online high school courses](#)

(Pensacola News Journal © 11/14/2011)

Many Florida high-school students choose to take online courses. Some do it to boost their grade point averages. Others might want to take courses not offered at their school. But this year, online classes are no longer a choice. They are a graduation requirement. Starting with this year's freshman class, students must take at least one virtual course in high school. The requirement is part...

[Programs offer independence to blind, visually impaired](#)

(Pensacola News Journal © 11/14/2011)

A private nonprofit organization that offers support and guidance to blind and visually impaired individuals. All services offered are free of charge. Programs are funded in part by the Florida Department of Education, Division of Blind Services. Monetary donations are welcome. » WHERE: 3107 N. Davis Highway. » DETAILS: 477-2663 or www.ibwest.org. When a pituitary tumor robbed Roy Alle...

[Schools visit parents at their homes](#)

(Sarasota Herald-Tribune © 11/14/2011)

Pinellas County school officials are trying a new approach to parent outreach: going door to door. The St. Petersburg Times said that school officials and community members visited families whose children attend one of two struggling elementary schools on Saturday. Parents were notified in advance, and district representatives showed up to introduc...

[Bessey Creek among finalists for Florida Green School Awards](#)

(Scripps News © 11/14/2011)

Bryan Garner, a member of the Treasure Coast community. This story is neither endorsed by nor affiliated with this site. Originally published 09:08 a.m., November 10, 2011 Updated 09:08 a.m., November 10, 2011 PALM CITY — Students at Palm City's Bessey Creek Elementary School are among a select group of finalists who will be honored at tonight's Florida Green School Awards. The event...

[Suspended teacher knew he faced consequences for refusing evaluation](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 11/14/2011)

LITHIA — Sitting at the Burger King across the street from Newsome High School, Joseph Thomas knew his job was on the line. It was Wednesday, the day Bill and Melinda Gates were in town. Thomas, 43, was ready to discuss why he was rejecting his peer evaluator under a new system funded by the Gates' foundation. A social studies teacher through-and-through, Thomas considered what his students...

[D.C. school reform targets early lessons](#)

(Washington Post © 11/14/2011)

Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist who thought play was the key to learning, died 72 years before the kindergartners at Powell Elementary School in Northwest Washington drew their first breath. But his work could change their academic future and the direction of D.C. school reform. As students pair off to "buddy read," act out chapters from storybooks and sit at their desks to write what they...

[Palm Beach County school district vows to fire bus drivers who stage another 'sick out'](#)

(WPTV NBC 5 Palm Beach County, West Palm Beach © 11/14/2011)

Stage another "sick out" protest, and you will be terminated. That's the message Palm Beach County School District transportation officials have for bus drivers who are unhappy with both the district and their union. "We're not going to tolerate this nonsense," said Pete DiDonato, transportation general manager. "They're fixing to get themselves fired." On Oct. 24, the district said, 26 driv...

[Florida offers diplomas to veterans](#)

(WTSP-TV © 11/14/2011)

Tallahassee, Florida - Florida is offering a heartfelt thanks to veterans by helping them achieve an educational goal that they may have thought would never happen. The Florida Department of Education is granting high school diplomas to veterans who joined the military before they finished high school. It's called the Florida Veteran Diploma Program. Diplomas are awarded to soldiers honor...

[Florida offers diplomas to veterans](#)

(WTSP-TV, and WJXX-TV © 11/14/2011)

:18 PM, Nov 11, 2011 | 0 comments Written by Dave Heller Tallahassee, Florida - Florida is offering a heartfelt thanks to veterans by helping them achieve an educational goal that they may have thought would never happen. The Florida Department of Education is granting high school diplomas to veterans who joined the military before they finished high school. It's called the Florida...

[Manatee County parents can soon view students' grades online](#)

(Bradenton Herald © 11/13/2011)

ataylor@bradenton.com MANATEE — Starting Monday, parents of high schoolers get online access to their children's academic information, including class grades and attendance. FOCUS — Manatee County Schools' new web-based information system — has merged all student record-keeping, replacing the outgoing technology known as Pinnacle. Parents of high schoolers will be the fir...

[Colleges Fear Tough Budget News From Congressional Supercommittee](#)

(Chronicle of Higher Education © 11/13/2011)

Optimists see scenarios in the coming days under which the secretive supercommittee of lawmakers on Capitol Hill spares higher education from the deep cuts needed to shrink the federal budget deficit. Perhaps major programs like Social Security and Medicare get heavily scaled back. Or the Pentagon, with the biggest share of nonentitlement spending, takes the biggest share of the hits. Or last wee...

['We Can Help Students Think About Who They Are and Who They Are Becoming'](#)

(Chronicle of Higher Education © 11/13/2011)

Throughout her life, Amy E. Ryken has been asked a version of the same question over and over: Are you a boy or a girl? Ms. Ryken, who worked as a schoolteacher for nearly 15 years and is now an associate professor of education at the University of Puget Sound, wanted to use questions she got from schoolchildren to help undergraduates who are training to be teachers deal with issues of gender iden...

[In the 21st-Century University, Let's Ban Books](#)

(Chronicle of Higher Education © 11/13/2011)

By Marc Prensky Recent news that South Korea plans to digitize its entire elementary- and secondary-school curriculum by 2015, combined with the declining cost of e-readers and Amazon's announcement earlier this year that it is selling more e-books than print books, prompts an interesting question: Which traditional campus will be the first to go entirely bookless? Not, of course, bookless in the...

[Maximum sentence appropriate](#)

(Citrus County Chronicle © 11/13/2011)

THE?ISSUE: Scamming of Citrus County School System. OUR?OPINION: Show no mercy. It's been more than four years since it was revealed that the Citrus County School System was swindled out of \$678,228 in government rebates. Thanks to Alabama "businessman" Jonathan Slaughter of eRate Consulting Services (ERC), the school system never received checks it was due under a f...

[Former teacher, minor to be extradited](#)

(Crestview News Bulletin © 11/13/2011)

A former Crestview teacher arrested last week in Ohio with a runaway teenager is being extradited back to Okaloosa County where she could face charges from multiple law enforcement agencies. Amanda L. Cooney, 25, was arrested Nov. 4 at a motel in Riverside, Ohio, along with a 16-year-old boy reported Oct. 24 by his mother as missing for a week. The minor, who has not been identified, was...

[Opinions vary on push for uniforms in Flagler schools](#)

(Daytona Beach News-Journal © 11/13/2011)

Clark Weaver BUNNELL – Jazmyn Clark remembers wearing a white collared shirt, blue bottoms and formal black shoes – no sneakers allowed – when she attended a charter school in Buffalo, N.Y., years ago. The 17-year-old will graduate this spring but she knows her younger sisters might have to wear uniforms next year....

[Bridge generational gap](#)

(Ft. Myers News-Press © 11/13/2011)

Our nation faces a generational divide that threatens to eradicate wisdom and wealth created over the decades. Americans are living longer than ever before, but indicators show we are entering an age where young people will be poorer and sicker than their forebears ? the first time our society has effectively taken such a step back. It foreshadows an eventual decline. Generation envy exacerbate...

[Route to Independence: Polytechnic Follows New Path](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 11/13/2011)

The University of South Florida Polytechnic on Wednesday sought to be separated from the USF System and gain the ability to chart its own course. It made the request in a meeting of the State University System's Board of Governors in Boca Raton. The board said "yes" in a 13-3 vote, but it conditioned independence on completion of a...

[Stormy Trip for USF Poly's Goodman](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 11/13/2011)

The University of South Florida Polytechnic got an answer to the grand question placed before the State University System's Board of Governors on Wednesday. The question: May the polytechnic separate from the USF System? The answer: yes, but with a long list of conditions. One question has been answered, another looms. Will the polytechnic's chief,...

[Miami-Dade, Broward superintendents meet, trade jokes](#)

(Miami Herald © 11/13/2011)

A joint session between the Miami-Dade and Broward school boards held last week marked the first meeting of the minds for Broward's new superintendent, Robert Runcie, and Miami-Dade Superintendent Alberto Carvalho. But did they see eye-to-eye on everything? Not exactly. "I was looking into his eyes," Carvalho told the board members before pausing for comic effect. "Truthf...

[Ben Bova: Sizing up schools and where we go from here](#)

(Naples Daily News © 11/13/2011)

I had lunch with a retired schoolteacher a little while ago and, naturally, we talked about public education. Although my doctorate is in education, my teaching experience is close to zero. As something of an outsider, when it comes to dealing with the problems of our public schools, I've often found it useful to compare our school systems to a business operation. Imagine a medium-sized business...

[University lobbyists dodge cuts](#)

(Palm Beach Post © 11/13/2011)

University students who rail against tuition hikes, program cuts and administrator salaries that they say are better suited to corporate boardrooms are finding an unlikely ally: Republican Gov. Rick Scott. By posting the salaries of 52,000 employees of the state's public universities on the Internet, Florida's multimillionaire chief executive has helped fuel the placard-waving student crowd...

[What if high school itself drives suicides?](#)

(Sarasota Herald-Tribune © 11/13/2011)

It's dismaying that any young and healthy high school student living an ordinary life could feel so overcome with despair that suicide is even contemplated. And so, whenever a teenage suicide happens, we try to find out what went wrong. Was the victim coping with extreme bullying, unwanted pregnancy, sexual abuse, parental divorce, a traumatic break...

[Where Jim Crow story and Jewish exiles' meet](#)

(Sarasota Herald-Tribune © 11/13/2011)

SARASOTA - One of the most obscure and ironic aspects of the American civil rights movement has its roots in Nazi Germany. They left Nazi Germany to arrive at an American crossroads In the years prior to the Holocaust, Jewish academicians fled their teaching positions in Germany for new lives in the U.S. Largely shunned by white American ...

[Lyons: Study shows teen suicide spike when school is in session](#)

(Sarasota Herald-Tribune © 11/13/2011)

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[Is Gov. Scott at war with academia?](#)

(South Florida Sun-Sentinel © 11/13/2011)

Laying the groundwork to revamp higher education in Florida, Gov. Rick Scott has questioned the value of liberal arts degrees, dissed anthropologists, proposed ending tenure for professors and posted salaries of all state university employees on the Internet. Scott also recently sent a letter to state university trustee boards pushing for change on campuses. He included excerpts from a Wall Stree...

[Broward superintendent to launch listening tour](#)

(South Florida Sun-Sentinel © 11/13/2011)

Broward Schools Superintendent Robert Runcie starts his "listening tour" Monday to hear from parents and community members. First stop is at 6:30 p.m. Monday at Fort Lauderdale High School. Much like the parent forums held in recent weeks, the listening tour is to get feedback on what the district does well and what it doesn't do so well. ...

[School employees want respect, fair compensation from next superintendent](#)

(South Florida Sun-Sentinel © 11/13/2011)

Some of the Palm Beach County School District's more than 20,000 employees said on Thursday they want the next superintendent to respect all employees and recognize their value. Employees at a forum voiced their frustrations about how the district's "haves" treat the "have-nots." "We need a superintendent who is going to step down from his throne at the 'Taj Mahal' and interact with employees," ...

[Pinellas school district tries going to parents](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 11/13/2011)

ST. PETERSBURG — The boy came to the door Saturday morning, looking skeptical. "Is your mom home?" asked Valerie Brimm, the Pinellas school district's director of strategic partnerships. "Tell her it's a good thing." It turned out to be a great thing. Brimm and two other district representatives came to 33-year-old Shaniqua Brown's home as part of a new approach aimed at getting par...

[Suspended teacher knew he faced consequences for refusing evaluation](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 11/13/2011)

LITHIA — Sitting at the Burger King across the street from Newsome High School, Joseph Thomas knew his job was on the line. It was Wednesday, the day Bill and Melinda Gates were in town. Thomas, 43, was ready to discuss why he was rejecting his peer evaluator under a new system funded by the Gates' foundation. A social studies teacher through-and-through, Thomas considered what his stu...

[Pasco schools fight widespread absenteeism among students](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 11/13/2011)

NEW PORT RICHEY — Kyla Lempfert knows all about missing school. As a sixth-grader last year, the Gulf Middle School student skipped 29 days. "I used to oversleep," said Kyla, 12, explaining that she often stayed up late watching television while living with a relative she said didn't care if Kyla made it to classes. "By the time I would wake up, it was too late to go to school." She ma...

[Mary Ann Lindley: America could take some lessons from Taiwan](#)

(Tallahassee Democrat © 11/13/2011)

TAIPEI, Taiwan This last week in Taipei seemed, in the early hours, as if it might be a trip into the past, a place where Eastern traditions and habits of courtesy, promptness, precision and even obedience prevailed. What seemed more accurate after a week immersed in the culture and communities in Taiwan was that all such qualities remain, but in balance and on scale with values and aspirations ...

[Pasco school wins art room makeover from HGTV show](#)

(Tampa Bay Online © 11/13/2011)

LAND O' LAKES – Art teacher Jill Hallauer will lose control of her classroom for roughly five days in December, but you won't hear her complaining. The art room at Pine View Elementary is in line for a \$25,000 makeover courtesy of the HGTV show "Home by Novogratz," which features a Manhattan couple with a flair for design. "People ask me, 'Is this a dream come true?' " Hall...

[School district should drop Facebook policy](#)

(Tampa Bay Online © 11/13/2011)

In an attempt to do the right thing, the Highlands County School District did exactly the wrong thing with its attempt to write some kind of policy policing teachers interacting with students using social media such as Facebook. It's a faulty idea and one the district needs to scrap. The district worked for a long time, putting together a policy regarding teachers "friending" students on Facebook...

[Manatee County's eleventh charter school eyes site for building on U.S. 301](#)

(Bradenton Herald © 11/12/2011)

ataylor@bradenton.com BRADENTON – The county's 11th charter school might be built on the corner of 51st Avenue East and U.S. 301. Representatives of Manatee Charter School have been eyeing that site with the intention of building a new facility. "We are still finalizing our due diligence on the site," said Richard Page, who works as vice president of development with ...

[At top schools, the elite defend right to protest](#)

(Bradenton Herald © 11/12/2011)

Associated Press The nation's elite universities have historically nurtured both the social movements that challenge the status quo and the upper crust that maintains it, and the Occupy movement is the latest to highlight that contradiction. With huge annual tuitions, multibillion-dollar endowments and long lists of powerful graduates working on Wall Street and in Washington, such schools e...

[Minority members oppose plans for ed law rewrite](#)

(Bradenton Herald © 11/12/2011)

AP Education Writer Minority lawmakers say House and Senate plans to rewrite the No Child Left Behind education law fail to protect minority children, those with disabilities and children learning English. The black, Hispanic and Asian Pacific American congressional caucuses insisted in a letter that they want a strong federal role in ensuring all students meet targets for reading and math....

[Editorial: Closing the gap](#)

(Gainesville Sun © 11/12/2011)

The Congressional Budget Office's October report on income inequality confirms the depth of the problem without clearly identifying the cause. More than an explanation, however, the nation needs a solution, before the income disparity gap becomes a chasm. The CBO determined that from 1979 to 2007 income grew far faster for the wealthiest Americans ...

[Facing Low, Frozen Salaries, Teachers Opt to Moonlight](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 11/12/2011)

MIAMI | By day, Wade Brosz teaches American history at an A-rated Florida middle school. By night, he is a personal trainer at 24 Hour Fitness. Facts Policies on moonlighting vary by district; some have no written guidelines, while others merely advise teachers to ensure any outside work doesn't interfere with their duties at school. One study on teache...

[USF Split Issue Puts Spotlight on Florida University System's Board of Governors](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 11/12/2011)

LAKELAND | They are the State University System of Florida Board of Governors, and they make decisions about education that have a great impact on Floridians but they are nowhere near as well-known as the Legislative governors. Facts The Florida Board of Governors was created in 2003 to centralize the administration of the State University System of Flori...

[Marco Academy principal, art teacher resign](#)

(Marco Island Sun Times © 11/12/2011)

During a special-called Marco Island Academy board meeting Friday night, charter high school principal Chris Pellant and art teacher Bill Kobe resigned. At the same time, the board announced that George V. Andreozzi from New York has been hired as interim principal. Board members said Rob Eder, a former Marco Island Charter Middle School teacher, will return to Marco Island to teach at the Acade...

[A sensible solution to student-loan debt](#)

(Miami Herald © 11/12/2011)

The college class of 2010 now has a dubious distinction. Its graduates who had student loans owed a record-high average of \$25,250, up 5.2 percent from the previous year, according to a new report from the Project on Student Debt, a nonprofit advocacy group. Last month, President Obama announced a plan to make it a little easier for 1.6 million college graduates to repay their government loans, re...

[On education, U.S. not Finland nor should it be](#)

(Miami Herald © 11/12/2011)

During the School Board's September meeting, I almost fell out of my chair when United Teachers of Dade President Karen Aronowitz lamented the fact that the U.S. public education system is not more like Finland's, which often ranks among the top nations in international student assessments. I don't think that it was a fair or constructive comparison. Such an apples-to-oranges ...

[Lake School Board rejects Leesburg land swap](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 11/12/2011)

LEESBURG —School Board members turned down a deal this week to swap the former Dabney Elementary School property in Leesburg in exchange for the former Kristen Court apartment complex, a plot of undeveloped land once considered an eyesore. City Manager Jay Evans said the 5-acre property, located adjacent to Rimes Early Learning and Literacy Center in the northwest part of the city, would be...

[Even suspicion of sex abuse must be reported, Florida experts say in wake of Penn State scandal](#)

(Palm Beach Post © 11/12/2011)

As federal officials this week continue to investigate whether Penn State University failed to report incidents of alleged sexual abuse on campus as mandated by federal law, many child advocates in Florida are hailing a state statute that requires professionals such as school personnel, to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect to law enforcement. But the law, which specifies teac...

[New schools superintendent sees budget as his biggest challenge](#)

(Palm Beach Post © 11/12/2011)

After his first week on the job, new Palm Beach County Interim Superintendent E. Wayne Gent said holding the top office is exactly what he thought it would be, a fast-paced job with several daunting months ahead until he gives up the post by next June. "It's been non-stop and I've enjoyed it," said Gent today after he took over the superintendent's job on Monday. Superintendent Bill Malon...

[Schultz: Cheer, cheer for old, above-average Florida](#)

(Palm Beach Post © 11/12/2011)

If the Legislature tries any harder to run higher education in this state, Florida will have a university system as mediocre as the Legislature. Of all the things Florida needs to improve higher education, a new university in Polk County - about 50 miles east of Tampa - would be nowhere near the top of most peoples' lists. Unfortunately, a new university in Polk County is at the top of J.D. Alexa...

[More details emerge after principal's suspension](#)

(Panama City News Herald © 11/12/2011)

SAND HILLS — The investigation into a Bay County principal's conduct was launched after a school bookkeeper brought allegations of retaliation to School Board members at a recent meeting. Deane Bozeman School Principal Bill Payne was suspended with pay by Superintendent Bill Husfelt on Thursday morning. The suspension is pending the outcome of an investigation, being handled by ...

[Reaction is mixed to requiring online high school courses](#)

(Pensacola News Journal © 11/12/2011)

Many Florida high-school students choose to take online courses. Some do it to boost their grade point averages. Others might want to take courses not offered at their school. But this year, online classes are no longer a choice. They are a graduation requirement. Starting with this year's freshman class, students must take at least one virtual course in high school. The requirement is part of...

[SFCC lauded in standards review](#)

(Sebring Highlands Today © 11/12/2011)

AVON PARK - After a team of nine educators scrutinized every aspect of South Florida Community College, one commented that in his 20 years of doing accreditation visits he has never left a campus with "no recommendations." But, in fact, the on-site and off-site review committees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges made no recommendations Thursday in their p...

[Student achievement top priority for interim Palm Beach County schools leader](#)

(South Florida Sun-Sentinel © 11/12/2011)

Palm Beach County schools' temporary leader wants parents, educators and the community to know that the system won't be stuck in a holding pattern for six months until a new superintendent arrives. Interim Superintendent Wayne Gent — who began work on Monday after a brief transition with former Superintendent Bill Malone — said his main focus is on improving student achievement and pr...

[South Floridians use Web to cut college costs](#)

(South Florida Sun-Sentinel © 11/12/2011)

Floridians are finding clever ways to take a bite out of the cost of going to college, many getting help from local companies and the latest Web-based technologies. Some are even doing so before they even settle on a school. After choosing the path to higher education, the biggest decision for college-bound students - and parents - is what campus to select and how to pay for it. Some locals earn...

[Florida lacks strong central plan for higher ed](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 11/12/2011)

Last week, Charles B. Reed addressed the Florida Council of 100, a group of business leaders, on the future of higher education in Florida. Here are those remarks, adapted and condensed for publication. I was chancellor of the State University System of Florida from 1986 to 1998. I have been chancellor of the California State University system since 1998. That's a long time spent as chan...

[Teacher suspended after defying Hillsborough school district's evaluation system](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 11/12/2011)

TAMPA — A veteran teacher was suspended Thursday for rejecting the evaluator chosen for him under a Gates-funded initiative that is revolutionizing the way the Hillsborough County School District assesses its teachers. School and union officials believe this is the first such act of defiance under Empowering Effective Teachers, a complex system of mentoring and evaluation funded by the Bill...

[Board of Governors student member recounts face-off with Sen. J.D. Alexander](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 11/12/2011)

TAMPA — A collective gasp swept across the room. Michael Long, the lone student member of the Florida Board of Governors, had just told the audience that Sen. J.D. Alexander threatened to stop supporting higher education if the board didn't make the University of South Florida Polytechnic the state's 12th public university. Heads turned to Alexander, sitting right behind Long. Th...

[Bob Dowling: Martin County nonprofits working hard to address special education issues public school system can't touch](#)

(Stuart News © 11/12/2011)

Betsy Stoutmorrill strides purposefully across the big conference room at the Cummings Library in Palm City on a bright Saturday morning. Behind her is a large screen with the definition of a learning disability. It's 50 words of eye-glazing educateeze. But Betsy isn't having any of the gobbledegook. "All's you need to know is that a learning disability doesn't mean you can't learn," she says with f...

[Jeff Pegler: From bullied to board, how it's critical that Indian River County address bullying in its schools](#)

(Stuart News © 11/12/2011)

Last month the Indian River County School Board spent several hours discussing one of the most important topics facing our students and our schools — bullying. After our workshop, I received varied feedback concerning the board's desire to explore bullying. Several people applauded the board's efforts while others questioned why we would spend time on an issue that has existed in schools for decad...

[Board of Governors Studying Plan for Higher Education Reform](#)

(Sunshine State News © 11/12/2011)

Posted: November 12, 2011 3:55 AM At the urging of Gov. Rick Scott, the governing board for the State University System is considering a plan to track performance of universities, reward good professors and encourage more graduates in science, technology, engineering and math. The plan, presented by a group made up primarily of university presidents to the State University Syste...

[Weekly Roundup - Polly Want a Technic? Move on Toward New University](#)

(Tallahassee-WCTV (CBS) © 11/12/2011)

Tallahassee, FL – November 11, 2011 – Could it all stem from this? Backers of a little school in Lakeland hope the state's future one that includes lots of jobs in science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM, could have reached an important mileston...

[Delaying the Polytechnic trainEditorial](#)

(Tampa Tribune © 11/12/2011)

USF Polytechnic will remain where it belongs, a part of the University of South Florida — at least for the time being. The Board of Governors of the state university system voted Wednesday to support only the concept of an independent Lakeland campus devoted primarily to classes in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. While we counseled rejecting Polytechnic's bid to depart USF, give...

[Weingarten and Ullico Join Gov. Kitzhaber to Announce Investment of up to \\$15 Million in Oregon Schools](#)

(American Federation of Teachers © 11/11/2011)

American Federation of Teachers President Randi to Support Cool Schools Initiative SALEM, Ore.á??Working together will help our children and our economy, said a union-affiliated financial and investment firm and the president of the American Federation of Teachers, as they joined Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber today to announce an investment of up to \$15 million in Oregon public schools, including low...

[Teachers in Volusia County take on critics of same-gender classes](#)

(Central Florida News 13 © 11/11/2011)

DELAND – Private schools have been doing it for years and for the last eight years Stetson University professors have been conducting an experiment to see how well Volusia county elementary students do in same gender, or all boy and all girls classrooms. One professor says the idea came from low grades among boys. They went to

parents and asked if the...

[Getting to work: Gov. Scott tries out teaching gig at Immokalee schools - PHOTOS](#)

(Collier Citizen © 11/11/2011)

a.inline_topic:hover { background-color: #EAEAEA; } Gov. Rick Scott, wearing his trademark embroidered shirt and cowboy boots, grinned at the front of the classroom as students filled in the seats. First period: American Government Honors. "Good morning, I'm Rick Scott. Anybody going to run for office?" he asked the Immokalee High School students — no takers, but a few chuckles. "So, we're goi...

[Veterans contribute unique skills, experiences to the classroom](#)

(CommunityCollegeTimes © 11/11/2011)

As the number of veterans enrolling at U.S. community colleges continues to climb, our role will grow increasingly more vital, meaning it will require more work or at least a different approach. Most people might not like taking on more or new roles. But for me, serving these students is a pleasure. Veterans are extraordinary students. Whether they are in veterans-only classes or in traditional...

[Flagler schools Taser free - but not for long](#)

(Daytona Beach News-Journal © 11/11/2011)

BUNNELL – More than a month after Flagler County School Board members gave their blessing for school-based deputies to carry Tasers, those deputies have yet to add the controversial devices to their belts. The Tasers probably won't be in Flagler's schools until after the Thanksgiving break, Superintendent Janet Valentine said. Over the last month, deputies have received training from the Sheriff...

[TIME AND TIME AGAIN: Doctors take on school start times in Okaloosa](#)

(Destin Log © 11/11/2011)

Parents and teachers are urged to attend the Monday, Nov. 14 School Board meeting to learn the detriments of sleep deprivation and the benefits of later school start times for our adolescent students. Local medical doctors Eleanor McCain, Deb Simkin, and Lynn Keefe will each speak to the Board regarding the research results showing harm to our teens who get inadequate sleep during school nights du...

[Controversy Surrounds Student Missing At School For 6 Hours](#)

(Florida Sentinel Bulletin © 11/11/2011)

Wednesday afternoon, a 15-year-old girl with Cerebral Palsy was reported missing from Progress Village Middle School. She was located about 6 hours later by a custodian on the school campus. Mrs. Carolyn Collins, President of the Hillsborough County Branch of the NAACP, said, "My telephone began blowing up from anonymous callers last night while I was in a meeting. People were concerned that the...

[Progress on public schools is too slow](#)

(Florida Times-Union © 11/11/2011)

The lead headline on the front page of The Florida Times Union asked: "The 3 R's in Ruins?" The article's subhead continued: "The chance for success not high in Duval schools." An introductory paragraph read in part: "Florida's public schools have the worst dropout rate in the nation — 41 percent. Duval County schools produce graduates that all too often need remedial training at the community col...

[**Those who educate our children well are more to be honored than parents.**](#)

(Florida Times-Union © 11/11/2011)

Duval County School Board Meeting Jacksonville, Florida Public Comments November 1, 2011 Edward Exson, Sr. Mr. Chairman: Board Members: Mr. Superintendent: Madam Deputy: Staff: Good Evening: In approximate 350 B.C Aristotle had this to say "Those who educate our children well are more to be honored than parents, for these only give life, those the art of living well."(End quote) Ar...

[**Brevard beachside schools' fans put up fight**](#)

(Florida Today © 11/11/2011)

COCOA BEACH — Waving homemade signs to "save our school" and "don't bus our kids," Roosevelt Elementary parents paraded into a meeting Thursday night with district officials to discuss proposals that include converting Cocoa Beach's only neighborhood elementary to a middle school. At the meeting, Sea Park parents held their own signs, opposing a proposal to close that Satellite Beach school...

[**Graduate tuition hike gets approval**](#)

(Florida Today © 11/11/2011)

BOCA RATON — Florida's Board of Governors approved a tuition hike Thursday for 18 graduate-level programs at five state universities that want to charge higher rates. The board, which oversees Florida's State University system, approved the higher tuition rate for specific graduate programs that are not in critical needs areas as part of a three-year pilot. The University of Central Florida...

[**Edison State appears on solid ground**](#)

(Ft. Myers News-Press © 11/11/2011)

To watch a replay, click on more videos Watch live streaming video from community_conversations at livestream.com Edison State College appears on its way to reaccreditation after an evaluation team Thursday disclosed no new findings of noncompliance. The committee did issue 14 recommendations, though, requiring the college to shore up academic policies, improve assessment strategies and hire mo...

[**Florida's state universities consider higher ed reforms**](#)

(Ft. Myers News-Press © 11/11/2011)

At the urging of Gov. Rick Scott, the governing board for the State University System considered a plan Thursday to track performance of universities, reward good professors and encourage more graduates in science, technology, engineering and math. The plan, presented by a group comprised primarily of university presidents to the State University System Board of Governors on Thursday, would use ...

[**Fla. board OKs tuition hike for 18 grad programs**](#)

(Gainesville Sun © 11/11/2011)

BOCA RATON — Florida's Board of Governors approved a tuition hike Thursday for 18 graduate-level programs at five state universities — including the University of Florida — that want to charge higher rates. The board, which oversees Florida's state university system, approved the higher tuition rate for specific graduat...

[**Senate bill ties schools hands**](#)

(Hernando Today © 11/11/2011)

BROOKSVILLE – It's not true that all teachers can't physically touch or punish students in Florida. Those who misbehave and have disabilities can find themselves strapped into a chair and prevented from moving. Others might find themselves placed in a secluded area for a "time-out." But a proposed Senate bill would change that and prohibit any student restraint unless there is a...

[Educators might gain voice through committee](#)

(Hernando Today © 11/11/2011)

BROOKSVILLE – State Sen. Mike Fasano believes a 21-member advisory committee consisting of current and former educators as well as parents and advocates will give them a voice in many education reforms sweeping the state. However, at least one local union official doubts the initiative will either pass or, if it does, that such a committee voice would impact lawmakers' decisions. Senate Bi...

[Grading system is mixed bag](#)

(Highlands Today © 11/11/2011)

SEBRING - As administrators and peer evaluators observe teachers in the classroom using the new evaluation system, concerns persist about whether student test data will be able to fairly and equitably gauge teacher effectiveness. Derrell Bryan, who is coordinating the initiative, provided the school board with an update of the evaluation system recently, noting the intent is not to fire teachers b...

[Goodman: USF Poly Decision 'What We Asked for'](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 11/11/2011)

LAKELAND | Marshall Goodman's return to the University of South Florida Polytechnic was the subject of much chattering at the outset of a Thursday meeting at his Lakeland campus. Then he stood up to speak. Total silence. Every seat was taken, some people stood along the walls of the room. "This is what we asked for," Goodman said triumphantly. ...

[Alabama school board won't rescind core standards](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 11/11/2011)

MONTGOMERY, Ala. - The Alabama Board of Education refused Thursday to rescind its decision to adopt a set of national core standards for teaching math and English. The board voted 6-3 to stick with a decision it made in November to adopt the national standards known as Common Core despite criticism board members have received from mostly conservativ...

[Commission gives Edison State College officials 14 recommendations for reaccreditation](#)

(Naples Daily News © 11/11/2011)

A three-day reaccreditation visit at a.inline_topic:hover { background-color: #EAEAEA; } Edison State College culminated Thursday with 14 recommendations for improvement. President a.inline_topic:hover { background-color: #EAEAEA; } Kenneth Walker and the school's trustees are confident they can meet them all by June when the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools commission will rule...

[School district details STEMM Center plans for Valparaiso Elementary building](#)

(Northwest Florida Daily News © 11/11/2011)

FORT WALTON BEACH — Okaloosa County soon might be graduating many more students with an interest in science and math careers if a proposed STEMM Center is opened in the county next fall. Superintendent of Schools Alexis Tibbetts and district staffers offered details of the proposed Science, Technology, Engineering, Math and Medical Center during a School Board workshop Thursday. * View...

[Universities may lower tuition so more students will seek high-tech degrees](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 11/11/2011)

BOCA RATON — Over the next two months, Florida public universities will be discussing several controversial changes aimed at boosting the number of graduates in high-tech fields — graduates that state leaders have stressed Florida needs more of to help improve its economy. Universities will be debating, for example, boosting tuition for more popular programs such as the liberal ar...

[We asked you: Should schools prohibit students from hugging each other?](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 11/11/2011)

We asked you: Should schools prohibit students from hugging each other? YES 21% NO 79% Let normal hugging go Normal hugging should be allowed. Anything other than that should be left to the teacher who observes it. We [baby] boomers learned just how much we could do in front of different teachers. That's a great lesson opportunity for their futures. Cheril OrlandoSentinel.com Obey rules or ...

[Alabama school board wont rescind core standards](#)

(Orlando-WFTV (ABC) © 11/11/2011)

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — The Alabama Board of Education refused Thursday to rescind its decision to adopt a set of national core standards for teaching math and English. The board voted 6-3 to stick with a decision it made in November to adopt the national standards known as Common Core despite criticism board members have received from mostly conservative critics. Opponents had argued that th...

[Cafeteria Manager Accused Of Pocketing School Money](#)

(Palm Beach Gardens-WPBF (ABC) © 11/11/2011)

Steven Clarin WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — A cafeteria manager at a Boynton Beach elementary school is accused of stealing money from the Palm Beach County school district. Steven Clarin was charged Thursday with grand theft and organized scheme to defraud. Prosecutors said Clarin was responsible for collecting and depositing funds from cafeteria sales at Sunset Palms Elementary School into a bank a...

[School employees want respect, fair compensation from next superintendent](#)

(Palm Beach Post © 11/11/2011)

Updated: 9:27 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 10, 2011 Posted: 8:28 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 10, 2011 Some of the Palm Beach County School District's more than 20,000 employees said tonight they want the next superintendent to respect all employees and recognize their value. Employees at a forum voiced their frustrations about how the district's "haves...

[No exclusivity for parents](#)

(Palm Beach Post © 11/11/2011)

If parents west of Boynton Beach get a charter middle school and a charter high school, those Canyon-area residents should not get exclusive charters. The Palm Beach County School District should require that the proposed charter schools be open to a wide applicant pool. Specifically, the district should not allow middle and high schools being developed by the not-for-profit Somerset Academy to l...

[Union 'sent a message' to school district](#)

(Panama City News Herald © 11/11/2011)

PANAMA CITY — Leaders of the union representing school support personnel say their members “sent a message” to school district officials about protecting their jobs when they rejected a new employment contract with Bay District Schools. Until a new employment contract is signed by School Board members and the union, nearly 800 employees in the Bay Education Support Personnel Uni...

[Broward School Board considers magnet school changes](#)

(South Florida Sun-Sentinel © 11/11/2011)

With budget constraints and fierce competition from charter schools, the Broward School Board is taking a hard look at which magnet schools may not be drawing enough students. Programs that aren't popular could be changed or canned. Successful magnets, such as the district's two Montessori schools, could be replicated or expanded. "Whatever's not working, in my opinion, you don't continue it," s...

[A timid rebuke for USF Poly](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 11/11/2011)

The Florida Board of Governors' decision Wednesday to check the ambitions of the University of South Florida Polytechnic in Lakeland stopped, for now, an ill-conceived plan to immediately grant the campus independence. But it was a timid outcome from a board that voters have charged with directing Florida's university system. Rather than kicking the issue down the road, the governors should have k...

[Students' Personal Information Exposed](#)

(Tallahassee-WCTV (CBS) © 11/11/2011)

Parents in Wakulla County are worried after the social security numbers of thousands of students were accidentally made public. Superintendent David Miller sent the letter to the parents of more than 2400 students in grades four through ten whose information was accidentally posted on line. ...

[Teachers File Merit Pay Lawsuit, Challenge State of Florida](#)

(West Orlando News © 11/11/2011)

The statewide teacher's union filed a lawsuit against the state of Florida on Wednesday, saying the new teacher merit pay law violates the state constitution. A lawsuit filed in circuit court in Leon County by the Florida Education Association says the merit pay law that ties the salaries of teachers and other school employees to student performance on tests is unlawful because it violates...

[School prayer back before lawmakers in 2012](#)

(WFSU Newsroom © 11/11/2011)

For the second year in a row, lawmakers are pushing legislation that would give school districts the option of allowing student led prayer at certain school events. The prayer is meant to be non-denominational, but Regan McCarthy reports some worry a specific religious message will seep into the invocation regardless. Senator Gary Siplin is sponsoring the bill. The legislation is clear in requir...

[USF Poly Given Path to Independence](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 11/10/2011)

LAKELAND | The University of South Florida Polytechnic didn't reach independence tonight, but it did get a road map showing how to get there. Facts BENCHMARKS TO BE MET BEFORE USF POLYTECHNIC CAN BECOME INDEPENDENT The Florida Board of Governors of the State University System late Wednesday set benchmarks it said must be achieved before USF Poly can beco...

[USF splinter campus receives preliminary approval to be 12th public university](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 11/10/2011)

A math- and science-focused branch of the University of South Florida has received preliminary approval to become the state's 12th university. The Florida Board of Governors, which oversees state universities, voted to allow USF Polytechnic in Lakeland to split off from the Tampa-based university if it meets certain milestones in planning. The decision was made Wednesday following four hours of d...

Have a great week! Please see the article below.

Deborah.



P-cola News Journal

A new look on life

Programs offer independence to blind, visually impaired

11:00 PM, Nov. 12, 2011

Written by Rebecca Ross

A private nonprofit organization that offers support and guidance to blind and visually impaired individuals. All services offered are free of charge.

Programs are funded in part by the Florida Department of Education, Division of Blind Services. Monetary donations are welcome.

» WHERE: 3107 N. Davis Highway.

» DETAILS: 477-2663 or www.ibwest.org.

When a pituitary tumor robbed Roy Allen of his sight in 2009, he thought his life was over.

"For a long time, I felt worthless," the 49-year-old Allentown resident said. "I couldn't do anything."

Allen, a big man with soft blue eyes, had been a farmer for most of his life. He was used to spending his time behind the wheel of his truck or on a tractor.

"After I lost my sight, I didn't know what to do with myself," he said. "It hurt my mom so bad to see me like that. She got on the internet and started searching."

His mother's worried sleuthing led to the Division of Blind Services. They put Allen in touch with Independence for the Blind of West Florida.

"That was the biggest blessing ever," he said, smiling. "They gave me my life back."

An independent life

Independence for the Blind is a private nonprofit agency that annually serves about 250 blind and visually impaired individuals of all ages in 10 counties.

It offers a wide range of programs, including independent living skills, computer and adaptive technology and vocational training. Instruction takes place in clients' homes or in the spacious C.W. Gemmill Learning Center on Davis Highway.

Most of the programs teach, or re-teach, the skills sighted individuals take for granted.

On a recent afternoon, a handful of adult clients gathered in a large meeting room at the Learning Center to practice money sorting. Those in the earlier stages of sight loss wore blindfolds, learning to identify currency by touch alone.

Instructor Micki Wiedbrauk offered encouragement as Daisy Hawkins sorted a pile of coins.

"Remember which coins have ridges," she said. "Quarters and dimes."

Executive Director Bruce Watson happily offers tours of the Learning Center, which opened in 2009.

"Before this, we were cubby-holed into two small leased properties," he said. "Here, we have room for our offices and training rooms."

There's a large kitchen, where clients learn cooking and food prep skills. There are three refrigerators and three stoves — all different models — along with dishwashers and microwaves.

A smaller staff kitchen contains a washer and dryer. Small "bump dots," placed in strategic spots, serve as reference points on dials and switches.

"They learn to use appliances like the ones they have at home," Watson said. "We want them to be comfortable and safe in their own kitchens."

Down the hall, another room contains computers and a Braille processor. Using voice-activated or text magnification software, clients become technologically savvy.

"The blind and visually impaired can use a computer keyboard like anyone else," Jason Grills, assistant tech supervisor, said. "The training takes about six months to a year, depending on the person."

Just a regular teen Parker Sington is one of the Independence for the Blind's younger clients.

The 17-year-old Pace High School junior has been mastering the JAWS screen reading software program, a program that translates text in to the spoken word, on his home computer, thanks to his instructor, Linda Eden.

Parker, an outgoing, straight-A student, is visually impaired. Damage to his occipital lobe, which occurred after birth, prevents his brain from processing what he sees.

"My eyes are fine," Parker said. "But that connection between my eyes and my brain doesn't really work."

His impairment doesn't slow him down, in any sense. Parker frequently ditches his white cane — which he hates — at home.

"I'm just a normal teenager," said the teen, who wants to be a radio personality like Brent Lane on Cat Country 98.7 FM, one day. "That's how I want people to see me."

Parker is among more than a dozen area teens involved in Independence for the Blind's transitional program. Classes focus on everything from social networking to renting that first apartment.

"We get them ready to graduate and go on to whatever they want to do," Watson said. "For some, that may be a job. For others, it's about becoming a functional adult."

A new vision Allen is a graduate of the center's adult daily living skills and computer training programs. He's regained his prized independence, taking care of himself — and his dog — in his Allentown home.

"I cook, clean, go online and do just about everything anyone else can do," he said, grinning. "I'm ready to get back to work, maybe in agricultural sales, or something like that. I just wish more employers understood what I'm capable of."

Allen still returns to the Gemmill Learning Center, but this time, as a willing guinea pig. Currently, he's taking part in a unique research study that might result in life-changing technology for the blind and visually impaired.

Wearing a pair of glasses containing a tiny camera, Allen scans a variety of high-contrast objects, or text. Electrical impulses from the camera vibrate a small pad that Allen holds in his mouth.

"I can feel the letters, or shape of the objects, on my tongue," he said. "It's really neat."

And it's just one more blessing that Independence for the Blind has given him, Allen says.

"It's a wonderful place, and the people couldn't be any nicer," he said. "Everyone should know about all the good they do."