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Subject: FW: 12-27-11 Education Round Up

FYI – have a great week! ☺

Sincerely,

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From: Champion-Mongiovi, Jamie
Sent: Tuesday, December 27, 2011 8:25 AM
Subject: 12-27-11 Education Round Up

Florida Department of Education



Legislators to consider Caylee's Law
(Bradenton Herald © 12/27/2011)

One in an occasional series previewing the Florida Legislature, which begins its session Jan. 10. By KYLE HIGHTOWER Associated Press ORLANDO — When the Florida Legislature begins its 2012 session next month it will do so just six months after a jury acquitted Casey Anthony of killing her 2-year-old daughter in one of the state's most high-profile murder trials. That verdict has some le...

Be mindful to play brain games
(Ft. Myers News-Press © 12/27/2011)

For ethical and practical reasons that make testing and examination fraught with problems, some facts related to Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia remain squishy. But plenty of words such as ?seem to suggest? and ?have been associated? have cropped up to describe some preventative and therapeutic behaviors. Like puzzles. ?Research has found that keeping the brain active seems to in...

[Top story No. 5: School Board votes for four-day school week in response to budget woes](#)
(Ocala Star Banner © 12/27/2011)

As state funding for school districts dwindled, the Marion County School Board voted early this year to launch four-day school weeks in 2012-13. Four-day school was the No. 5 local story of 2011. Each day, the Star-Banner has been counting down the Top 10 local stories as chosen by the paper's news staff. Superintendent of Schools Jim Yancey ...

[My Word: School Board sacrifices lamb of justice](#)
(Orlando Sentinel © 12/27/2011)

In an editorial on Dec. 13 before the final vote on the Orange County School Board district map, the Orlando Sentinel said the School Board political redistricting was a complex matter, essentially too complex for racial justice ("Orange schools solve district line puzzle"). The central problem for citizens is that districting is a fairly simple, but political process, which requires some spe...

[Fla. lawmakers considering allowing school bus ads](#)
(South Florida Times © 12/27/2011)

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Advertising seems to be everywhere these days – on city transit buses, at sports stadiums, on airliner tray tables and even in public restrooms. So why not on the exterior of school buses? Florida is one of 34 states that prohibit such advertising, but three similar bills have been filed to lift that ban and provide a new funding source for cash-s...

[Quit-smoking program for teens uses tech tools](#)
(St. Petersburg: WTSP (Ch. 10) © 12/27/2011)

Many smokers will resolve to quit on New Year's Day- and if some health educators have their way, increasing numbers of quitters will be teenagers, on Jan. 1 and throughout the year. The National Cancer Institute is rolling out a new quitting program aimed at teens. It now includes a website (teen.smokefree.gov) and texting support, and in January it will add a smartphone application, says Erik A...

[Mother says her autistic son was put in bag as discipline at school](#)
(St. Petersburg: WTSP (Ch. 10) © 12/27/2011)

(CNN) – A Kentucky woman says special education teachers put her autistic 9-year-old son inside a net ball bag as punishment at his school. The mother, Sandra Baker, told CNN Monday that she was called to her son's elementary school on December 14, because he was being unruly. "I saw a big green bag with the drawstring pulled and the (teacher's) aide sitting next to him," Baker said. "As I...

[Scott awakens old animosity between political leadership, FAMU](#)
(Sun-Sentinel © 12/27/2011)

TALLAHASSEE — Gov. Rick Scott was furious about what was going on at Florida A&M University. Robert Champion, a drum major in the university's famed Marching 100 band, was essentially beaten to death in a hazing ritual following the band's performance at the Florida Classic in Orlando on Nov. 19. A former student at FAMU's K-12 developmental school had been arrested in October on charges...

['An entrepreneurial education landscape'](#)
(The Gradebook Education Blog © 12/27/2011)

More charters? More companies offering virtual school? More Bill Gates? This recent piece from The Atlantic argues policymakers should continue eroding barriers that limit private-sector involvement with schools. It's written by John Bailey, director of Whiteboard Advisors, an education consulting group that includes former Florida education commissioner Jim Horne. Here's a snippet: Given the...

[**Girls rule grad rate in Florida**](#)

(The Gradebook Education Blog © 12/27/2011)

Girls rule grad rates in Florida Friday's St. Petersburg Times story pointed out girls in Florida graduate at a much better clip than boys, although the gap has narrowed from 8 percentage points in 2008 to 5.8 percentage points this year. If you want to scrutinize some of the data yourself, this link will take you to statewide numbers, with breakdowns by race and gender. The attachments below wil...

[**Is International Baccalaureate anti-American?**](#)

(The Gradebook Education Blog © 12/27/2011)

Don Stephenson caused a minor uproar when he called International Baccalaureate "anti-American" as he announced his candidacy for Pasco County School Board. Several readers took him to task in the comments section of another blog post here on the Gradebook. "Your comments about IB are clearly uninformed, or at least the result of misinformation put out by an ultra-right-wing faction. This co...

Have a great day! Please see the articles below.

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Sentinel School Zone Blog

By Leslie Postal

Fl's Algebra test: Passing or scoring "college ready" won't be easy, it seems

Florida high school students must now pass the state's algebra end-of-course exam to earn a diploma. It looks like that will be no easy task.

When the State Board of Education adopted a new FCAT math and reading scoring system last week, it also adopted a scoring plan for the new algebra exam. As we noted then, the failure rate on that math test could hit 46 percent, based on data from last year.

The new math test was given for the first time last spring. Data from that testing session shows that 46 percent of students would have scored a level 1 or 2 on the 5-level test. It's scored like FCAT, so 1s and 2s mean a failing mark . Eighteen percent of those failures would have been 1s, a scoring showing those students had "little success with the content."

Students who fail have to take the test again.

About 55 percent of the students would have passed (earning at least a 3) and 17 percent would have scored well enough (a 4 or better) to be "high achieving" and show they have the "potential to meet college-readiness standards" by graduation.

Algebra, long viewed as a gate-keeper course on the college-bound track, is now routinely taken in middle school by the brightest students.

But it also a course in which many students traditionally have struggled. Among local high schoolers, it's not been unusual for half those enrolled in algebra 1 for the first time to get Ds and F's.

So it's probably not surprising that the failure rate on the statewide algebra exam will likely be high, at least this first year. And state educators have said they mean the exam to be a challenging one, part of their effort to make sure students leave high school ready for college.

It also won't be surprising if we hear complaints and worries about the high failure rate — and about how many students need extra doses of algebra lessons before they sit for the exam again.

State of Florida defends its denial of tuition waivers for homeless

By JANE MUSGRAVE

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Last December, about 40 homeless people who were living at The Lord's Place were taking classes at Palm Beach State College. This year, there are eight.

Although there are several reasons for the drop, a major factor is the college's decision to reject applications for free tuition from people who live in the nonprofit's free or heavily subsidized apartments, said Diana Stanley, executive director of the agency, which serves the homeless.

"People are getting caught up in the definition of homelessness," she said.

The 250 people who are living in the apartments in West Palm Beach and Boynton Beach are homeless, she said. However, because they have roofs over their heads, college officials say they aren't eligible for free tuition despite a state law that allows the homeless to attend state colleges and universities at no cost.

This month, a Lake Worth group that provides apartments to the homeless sued the college, claiming it is violating the law. The Palm Beach Recovery Coalition filed suit after PBSC said five homeless men who live in its apartment don't qualify for free tuition.

John Holdnak, vice chancellor for financial policy for the Florida Department of Education's division of colleges, said the group's beef isn't with the college - it's with the law.

There's no doubt, he said, that interest in the program has grown dramatically in recent years. Three years ago, offering free tuition to the homeless cost the state roughly \$300,000. Last year, it cost more than \$1 million.

However, he said, the amount pales in comparison with the cost of providing free tuition to other groups that are eligible under the same law. Allowing students to dual-enroll in state colleges while they are still in high school costs roughly \$50 million annually, he said.

"It's a fairly small program," he said of the homeless tuition exemption.

On the university level, it's nearly non-existent. According to the Florida Board of Governors, during the 2009-10 fiscal year, the state's university system waived fees for three homeless people at a cost of \$5,787. All were for classes at the University of South Florida in Tampa.

The difference is that people still have to qualify to attend state universities. State colleges, formerly known as community colleges, have to accept all applicants.

And the program is getting increasingly costly, PBSC officials said. Last year, providing free tuition to 186 homeless people cost the college \$371,443, more than a third of the amount incurred at all of the state's other colleges combined. The burgeoning expense spurred PBSC to crack down on the program, said attorney Grant Skolnick, who is representing the five homeless men in the lawsuit.

Holdnak said it's not about money. "It's the legal definition that the college has to follow," he said.

Under the law, free college or university tuition is available to "a student who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence or whose primary nighttime residence is a public or private shelter."

If the legislature had ended the definition there, clients of The Lord's Place and the Palm Beach Recovery Coalition would be eligible for free tuition, he said. However, the law goes on to say that the shelter has to be "designed to provide temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized."

With that clause in place, it means that free tuition is available to people who live on the streets or those who are in government-sanctioned halfway houses, such as those that serve as the final stop for people before they leave prison. Those who believe the law should be broader should take it up with the legislature, Holdnak said.

Stanley said she plans to take another look at the law. If wording is the problem, she said it is likely she will speak to local state lawmakers about tweaking the definition.

In the meantime, she said, her caseworkers say PBSC officials have tried to find ways to let homeless people take classes. They helped one client get a Pell grant to continue her studies.

Grace Truman, a college spokeswoman, said such assistance is offered to all students who can't afford tuition.

Stanley said The Lord's Place also is looking at other ways to help clients improve their job skills.

Already, it offers classes to help people land jobs in retail, culinary, property management, clerical and counseling fields.

"Of course, it's discouraging," she said of the college's policy. "A lot of our guys were going there. A lot of our moms were going there."

"But we like to have a menu. PBSC used to be the largest item on the menu. Now it's just one of the items on the menu," she said.