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Subject: FW: Education Round Up 1-07-12 through 1-09-12

FYI have a great week!

Sincerely,

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From: Champion-Mongiovi, Jamie
Sent: Monday, January 09, 2012 9:11 AM
Subject: Education Round Up 1-07-12 through 1-09-12

Florida Department of Education

News Clips: January 7-9, 2012

[OK, Let's Teach Graduate Students Differently. But How?](#)

(Chronicle of Higher Education © 01/09/2012)

By Leonard Cassuto A couple of months ago, Anthony T. Grafton and James Grossman made a "very modest proposal" that wasn't very modest at all. As president and executive director of the American Historical Association, respectively, the two mounted history's official disciplinary pulpit to endorse a new way of looking at graduate education in the field. "Many of these students," the authors wrot...

[Florida legislators to watch](#)

(Florida Times-Union © 01/09/2012)

Sen. John Thrasher, R-St. Augustine The chairman of the powerful Senate Rules Committee has staked out a public position against a bill that would allow three destination casinos in South Florida and must pass out of Thrashers Rules Committee before getting to the full Senate for a vote. Thrasher is also in the middle of a heated fight for the future Senate president. Thrasher backs Andy Gardin...

[Column on FCAT based on faulty assumptions](#)

(Florida Today © 01/09/2012)

Matt Reed's recent column, "New, tougher FCAT will drop school grades," regarding the new FCAT, has two main flaws: It is based on faulty assumptions and a contradiction. The faulty assumptions: First, we are doing our students a favor by preparing them for college. The percentage of American adults nationally with a four-year college degree has hovered around 30 percent since 2004. It varies, o...

[Tallahassee: the ghost town](#)

(FSView © 01/09/2012)

For about five months of each year, a quarter of Tallahassee's residents vanish. When the universities close for summer holiday and spring and winter breaks, students and professors jump town, leaving the rest of the city behind. As cars pack the interstates after finals are finished, many Tallahasseeans notice local roadways opening up. Genoa Belson, a Tallahassee Community College student and m...

[2012 Legislative session: The issues](#)

(Ft. Myers News-Press © 01/09/2012)

It's almost becoming an annual rite each year in Tallahassee: Another year, another billion-dollar plus budget shortfall. Florida lawmakers head into their annual session confronted by an almost \$2 billion gap. This time around it is primarily caused by an unenviable combination of growing expenses in safety net programs such as Medicaid at the same a sluggish economic recovery is expected to kee...

[Teachers say it helps students learn](#)

(Orlando-WFTV (ABC) © 01/09/2012)

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. As her students made cartoons sequencing their daily routines to learn about sequencing, Jessica Cross circled the room checking on their work. "I like that detail. This makes it clear, very clear," the third-grade teacher at Mooreland Heights Elementary School said to one student. Prior to the lesson, the students also learned about sequencing in their art class. "I ...

[Elementary school students asked about slavery, number of beatings in math homework](#)

(WFTS ABC Channel 28 Tampa © 01/09/2012)

ATLANTA - An Atlanta parent was shocked after his 8-year-old son brought a math worksheet home that referenced slavery and beatings in the mathematical equations multiple times, ABC News reports . Christopher Braxton, whose son attends Beaver Ridge Elementary, couldn't believe his eyes. One math problem read, If Frederick got two beatings per day, how many beatings did he get in one week? ...

[Ads on school property slow to surface in Flagler](#)

(Daytona Beach News-Journal © 01/08/2012)

BUNNELL - Flagler County school officials opened the doors to advertising last fall, but you won't see many ads on district property yet. The School Board decided in November to allow ads on websites, newsletters, newspapers, school supplies, clothing, school signs, uniforms and district vehicles. Board members said they hoped the ads could generate much-needed revenue during a tough fiscal per...

[Legislature: More than redistricting](#)

(Florida Times-Union © 01/08/2012)

In the run-up to the Florida Legislature convening Tuesday, there's been much talk that redistricting may overshadow and even preclude action on important issues. That must not be allowed to happen, and no lawmaker should try to use that as an excuse for inaction. Florida faces some major problems that have been put off or handled poorly in

recent legislative sessions, often at the be...

[Point of View: Student vouchers are no threat to public education](#)

(Florida Times-Union © 01/08/2012)

Florida needs a thriving public education system, and parents want schools that fit their own childrens needs. Only in such partisan and acrimonious times could these objectives be viewed as in conflict. Unfortunately, that is one part of the tug of war that is gripping this state as educators and legislators struggle over increasing demands and decreasing dollars. Even the most earnest schoo...

[Matt Reed: Tallahassee or tenure?](#)

(Florida Today © 01/08/2012)

Critics of State Sen. Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island, his job as a university professor and his old-but-still-controversial book deal with Brevard Community College are sure to like a new ethics bill. Fans of state Rep. John Tobia, R-Melbourne, will not. The bill introduced Friday by Sen. John Thrasher, R-Jacksonville, would prohibit any lawmaker from also working as an employee or contracto...

[Education law's promise falls short after 10 years](#)

(Gainesville Sun © 01/08/2012)

WASHINGTON The No Child Left Behind education law was cast as a symbol of possibility, offering the promise of improved schools for the nation's poor and minority children and better prepared students in a competitive world. Yet after a decade on the books, President George W. Bush's most hyped domestic accomplishment has become a symbol t...

[Board to consider teacher, employee pay](#)

(Hernando Today © 01/08/2012)

BROOKSVILLE – A tentative agreement with the Hernando Classroom Teachers Association would allow for pay increases to employees at least halfway through this school year. During the 7 p.m. meeting, school board members will consider approving the HCTA contract, which would provide a half-salary step and currently calls for eliminating two paid holidays although that matter r...

[Lakeland High as A Charter School: Keep All Students in Mind](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 01/08/2012)

Lakeland Senior High School is gathering information and holding discussions to decide whether to convert from its standard public school format into a charter school. The idea shows some promise, but pitfalls and false premises must be avoided to ensure that all Lakeland High School students would benefit. Additionally, the charter conversion of such a high-profile Polk school could hav...

[District Releases Bus Crash Details](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 01/08/2012)

The Manatee School District will pick up all the medical expenses for the 22 students injured in a school bus crash. A school bus video camera captured the screams of the students as the bus slammed into a tractor-trailer in East Manatee on Thursday. School officials played the video at a news conference Friday. School officials said that there was no sign that the driver, 68-year-old ...

[Teacher accused of punching fifth-grader](#)

(Ocala Star Banner © 01/08/2012)

A 65-year-old teacher who allegedly punched a fifth-grader in the face while they were in the classroom on Friday was arrested by a sheriff's deputy and charged with battery, according to a Sheriff's Office report. Deputy Stephen Juliano went to Kingsbury Academy, an alternative school at 5895 SE 83rd St., and was told by a school offici...

[Addressing homeless childrens needs](#)

(Orlando-WFTV (ABC) © 01/08/2012)

NATCHEZ, Miss. Currently 80 homeless children receive services from the Natchez-Adams School District, and the schools have identified 200 other potentially homeless students, district Homeless Coordinator Geraldine Geyen said. In a district in which nearly 95 percent of the approximately 4,000 students qualify for free and reduced lunches, some school officials said there are likely mo...

[How a 'B' school grade becomes a 'D'](#)

(Panama City News Herald © 01/08/2012)

By CARLA LOVETT and JOHN GRAHAM PANAMA CITY This week the state of Florida released the school grades for high schools for last school year (2010-2011). While these letter grades appear in a neat package that seems straightforward and easy to understand, in reality there is much more to the determination of the letter grade than meets the eye. This is particularly true for small schools li...

[Will Gov. Rick Scott get it right when selecting a replacement for Lew Williams on the Pinellas School Board?](#)

(Saint Petersburg © 01/08/2012)

As of last Friday, eight individuals have applied to fill the deceased Lew Williams seat on the Pinellas School Board. But even with that many candidates to choose from, that doesn't mean Gov. Rick Scott will get it right when selecting Williams replacement. Of Florida's 67 counties, few have been as difficult for Rick Scott to make inroads than Pinellas, a bastion of mod...

[Success of Florida Virtual School is difficult to measure](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 01/08/2012)

The fastest growing public school district in Florida doesn't have football, school lunches or busing. It doesn't get a grade from the state, and it operates free of the rules and scrutiny that dog most public schools. Students in this district conduct frog dissections without ever stepping in a science lab, take PE without ever going into a gym and learn how to drive without ever getting in a c...

[Fiorentino ready to tackle difficult tasks](#)

(Tampa Bay Online © 01/08/2012)

LAND O' LAKES – EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second article in a series of stories on Pasco people to watch in 2012. Superintendent Heather Fiorentino could be busy in 2012, both on the campaign trail and at school district headquarters on Gator Lane. Fiorentino, a Republican who became schools superintendent in 2004 and was re-elected in 2008, plans to seek a third term. No ...

[Weingarten On Gates Foundation Report on Measuring Effective Teaching](#)

(American Federation of Teachers © 01/07/2012)

Gates report "in essence debunks the top-down, test-driven strategy that makes test scores the principal evaluation tool." Statement by Randi Weingarten, President, American Federation of Teachers, A The Measures of Effective Teaching project, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, today released a report highlighting the value of multiple measures of teacher effectiveness. WASHINGTON...

[Students warned driver of pending crash, video shows](#)

(Bradenton Herald © 01/07/2012)

chawes@bradenton.com MANATEE – Video of Thursdays school bus accident that injured 21 children and the driver shows the students gave driver Charles Robert Orr ample warning that he was about to ram into a semi truck. One student began shouting, Watch out! five seconds before the crash occurred, and by the time the school bus plowed into the truck, almost every student on...

[Seven youths charged with beating girl on school bus](#)

(Gainesville Sun © 01/07/2012)

OCALA Deputies were dispatched to Marion Oaks Elementary School after receiving a report about a fight on a school bus. The bus driver told deputies he was driving down the street when he saw an altercation on the bus and stopped. The driver said when the bus stopped, the fighting also stopped, so he continued. While driving, the driver sai...

[Legislative Session Preview: Scott's Higher Ed Proposals Likely To Wait](#)

(North Escambia.com © 01/07/2012)

January 7, 2012 Despite the attention paid to Gov. Rick Scotts ideas about reshaping Floridas higher education system, it looks like a major overhaul of colleges and universities will wait until the 2013 session. Legislators arent ruling out the possibility of addressing at least some of Scotts ideas this year, but leaders such as House Speaker Dean Cannon, R...

[Funding teachers' pay is not simple, district says](#)

(Northwest Florida Daily News © 01/07/2012)

The Okaloosa County School District is not flush with cash, despite recent assertions that would indicate otherwise, according to officials. The districts budget came under scrutiny earlier this week during an impasse hearing to resolve whether or not county teachers would receive a step pay increase this year. The school district declared the impasse after it failed to reach an agr...

[Rankings announced: 'It's not a very big surprise to be No. 1'](#)

(Northwest Florida Daily News © 01/07/2012)

NICEVILLE For the second year in a row, Okaloosa Countys Collegiate High School ranks as the best of the best among Floridas high schools. The school on the campus of Northwest Florida State College received 1,511 of a possible 1,600 points on educational criteria. Points are awarded in categories that include FCAT scores, learning gains, rigor of courses, post-secondary re...

[Dual-language classes on the rise in Central Florida](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 01/07/2012)

When it comes time for math and phonics at Spring Lake Elementary School, first-graders in an experimental classroom stop speaking English and start learning in a language that's foreign to many of them. For about an hour a day, students at the Seminole County school who have never spoken Spanish will learn their numbers and letters, sing and play games completely in Spanish. The goal is...

Have a great day! Please scroll down to see the articles below.

Education Week: House ESEA Draft Would Rein in Federal Accountability Rules

The Seattle Times: Gates study: Once-a-year teacher evaluations not enough

Florida Voices: Miracle of Spending Cuts and Rising Grades

Education Week: Popular Frameworks Found to Identify Effective Teachers

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Education Week

House ESEA Draft Would Rein in Federal Accountability Rules

By Alyson Klein

House Republicans released two draft bills that would significantly scale back the federal role in K-12 schools and go further than any other proposal yet to dismantle the accountability tenets at the heart of the decade-old No Child Left Behind Act.

The measures, put forth by U.S. Rep. John Kline, R-Minn., chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee today, take some of the same steps as a bipartisan Senate rewrite of NCLB and the Obama administration's own vision for rewriting the law. Like those proposals, the Republican bills would entirely scrap the laws signature yardstick, adequate yearly progress, or AYP, while largely keeping NCLB's current testing schedule in place. ("Obama Outlines NCLB Flexibility," September 28, 2011.)

However, the proposals take sharply different turns in other areas. They would, for example, significantly water down the federal role in intervening in schools, including the lowest performers, and would grant broad funding flexibility to districts.

In renewing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, of which NCLB is the latest version, the drafts would:

Require districts to craft teacher evaluations based in part on student outcomes, and use them in personnel decisions;

Eliminate tutoring and school choice requirements under NCLB;

Retain the laws testing regime in math and reading in grades 3-8 and once in high school, but eliminate science as a required subject;

Get rid of the laws requirement that teachers be highly qualified, or required to demonstrate they are competent in the subject they are teaching and be state-certified;

Limit how much money could be spent on class-size reduction.

And unlike on the Senate side, where U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, the chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, was able to get support from three Republicans for his NCLB rewrite, the House vision is a Republican-only affair. Rep. Kline had been negotiating with Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., the top Democrat on the panel, but the two were unable to reach agreement.

The scope of the federal role in education was the source of the conflict, Rep. Kline said Jan. 5 on former Education Secretary Bill Bennett's radio program Morning in America.

Democrats are reluctant to let go of the power of the secretary of education, the committee chairman said. We do agree that the law needs to be changed.

But, if Rep. Kline is unable to attract Democratic support for the measure, it may not get very far. Sen. Harkin said last year that he does not want to move his committee's ESEA reauthorization proposal to the floor unless he sees a bipartisan product out of the House.

Already Rep. Miller has made it known he isn't happy about the partisan path.

"While parties in both houses working together is the tried and true way to accomplish education reform, House Republicans have now opted to walk away from bipartisanship and craft partisan legislation," he said in a statement. "By abandoning efforts to reach a consensus, this partisanship shuts the door on NCLB reform in this Congress."

The House proposal, which is considered a discussion draft subject to change, would retain the laws requirement to test students in reading and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school. And it would require schools to continue to break out data to show how special populations of students such as English-language learners, children in poverty, and racial minorities are doing relative to their peers.

The House proposal, which is considered a discussion draft subject to change, would retain the laws requirement to test students in reading and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school. And it would require schools to continue to break out data to show how special populations of students such as English-language learners, children in poverty, and racial minorities are doing relative to their peers.

But states would no longer have to test students in science a subject that is required under the NCLB law but does not have to be used to measure AYP.

And under the measure, states would get to craft their own accountability systems. That general principle largely jibes with a bill that passed the Senate education committee with bipartisan support, and with the administrations plan to offer states waivers from pieces of the NCLB law in exchange for embracing certain reform priorities. But the waiver package required states to continue to set annual goals for student achievement, which is not called for under the House or Senate proposals.

The House proposal also would go much further than the Senate and the administrations waiver package in dismantling the federal role in intervening in struggling schools essentially gutting it.

Under both the House and Senate proposals, states would get to cook up their own remedies for many schools that arent making progress. And both proposals would get rid of the requirement that states allow students in underperforming schools to transfer to better schools or get free tutoring.

But the House would scrap the School Improvement Grant program, which calls on states to use a very specific set of interventions including removing the principal and getting rid of some teachers in schools that are in the bottom 5 percent for student achievement. The state wouldnt have to focus on fixing a certain percentage of schools under the House bill.

And, unlike the Senate bill, the House wouldnt require states to figure out a plan for the 5 percent of schools with persistent achievement gaps. Thats also a difference from the administrations waiver package, which calls for states to figure out a plan for their bottom 5 percent of schools, and for another 10 percent of schools that are struggling.

Standards Debate

The House measure also takes a different tack than the Senate when it comes to academic standards. The House bill would not require states to set college-and-career standards a major aim of both the Senate bill and a marquee goal of the Obama administration.

Under both the Senate bill and the administrations waiver package, states would have to develop standards that would prepare students to take credit-bearing courses at post-secondary institutions, or for a career. The House proposal supports those aims.

But under the House proposal, the secretary of education would be barred from doing anything to encourage states to craft more uniform, rigorous standards. That would seem to take aim at U.S. Secretary Arne Duncans decision to give a leg up in the Race to the Top competition to states that worked together to set standards. It also would seem to rebuff the departments move to make adoption of college- and career-ready standards a key feature of its waiver package.

The House proposal also would make big changes when it comes to funding flexibility for schools. It would eliminate the requirement known as maintenance of effort, which calls for states and school districts to keep up their own financing for education at a certain level in order to tap federal funds.

And the legislation would provide significant new funding flexibility for districts that want to transfer money aimed at one special population such as English-language learners to another.

The measure would merge programs aimed at migrant students, neglected and delinquent children, English-language learners, rural students, and Indian children, into the biggest K-12 program, the Title I program for disadvantaged children. Districts could use the funds for any activity authorized under those programs. No money could be transferred out of Title I schools, but extra funds could go to other low-income schools.

And, under a second proposal, states would be required to reserve a certain portion of funding to support state and local programs outside of the traditional public school system, such as tutoring and after-school programs.

Teacher Issues

But in at least one area teacher evaluations the second House draft appears to carve out a broader role for the federal government than the Senate bill does.

The House proposal would scrap the laws highly qualified teacher requirement, which requires teachers to have content expertise in their subjects, and call for districts to craft teacher-evaluation systems that would rely in significant part on student achievement, although other measures could also be included. Districts would have to use the evaluations to inform personnel decisions. And districts would have to come up with more than two categories for rating teachers.

The Senate bill, on the other hand, doesnt make teacher evaluations a requirement for every district, just for those that want to get competitive grants from the Race to the Top or the Teacher Incentive Fund, which provides money for performance pay.

And the House measure would make a major change to how states spend roughly \$2.5 billion a year in federal funding for teacher quality. Right now, states have broad flexibility to spend that money on professional development, reducing class size, and other activities. But, under the proposal, just 10 percent of funds could go to class-size reduction.

This isnt the first reauthorization measure that the House education committee has put forward. The panel has taken somewhat of a piecemeal approach to reauthorizing the law. Last year, the committee approved a partisan bill that would have scrapped more than 40 K-12 programs. And it approved another funding flexibility measure, which got support only from Republicans.

So far, theres been just one bipartisan piece of legislation. The full House approved a bill that would allow states to tap federal funds to replicate charter school models that have a track record of success.

The Seattle Times

Gates study: Once-a-year teacher evaluations not enough

Annual evaluations aren't enough to help teachers improve, and school districts using infrequent classroom observations to determine their best and worst teachers could be making some big mistakes, according to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

By **DONNA GORDON BLANKINSHIP**

Once-a-year evaluations aren't enough to help teachers improve, says a report by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

And school districts using infrequent classroom observations to decide who are their best and worst teachers could be making some big mistakes, according to the second part of a multiyear study from the foundation.

Preliminary results were posted online Friday.

Good teacher evaluations require multiple nuanced observations by trained evaluators. Those results should be combined with other measures, such as student test scores and classroom surveys, to gather enough information to both evaluate teachers and help them improve, the researchers found after nationwide experiments involving thousands of teachers.

The most common teacher-evaluation method used by school districts today a single classroom observation once every few years has only a 33 percent chance of resulting in an accurate assessment of a teacher, the researchers found.

"This confirms what many teachers have been saying for years: That when high-stakes decisions are being made, school districts should allow for more than one observation," said Tom Kane, deputy director of the Seattle-based foundation's education program and leader of the research project.

Teachers across the nation are getting too little feedback and are being left alone to figure out what they need to do to improve, says Vicki Phillips, director of the foundation's education program.

For the past two years, the foundation has been working to build a system of teacher evaluation and feedback to help teachers improve their craft and assist school administrators in their personnel decisions.

This report comes amid efforts across the country to change the way teachers are evaluated. Most of the new systems are a direct result of a call by the federal government for an education overhaul, and many are finding implementation of the evaluation systems difficult.

The core of the Gates Foundation study has been a collection of digital videos of more than 13,000 lessons in classrooms of teachers who volunteered to be studied.

The classrooms are being studied in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools; the Dallas Independent School District; Denver Public Schools; Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa and St. Petersburg, Fla.; Memphis City Schools; The New York City Department of Education; and Pittsburgh Public Schools.

The report's main conclusions:

High-quality classroom observations require clear, specific standards, well-trained and certified evaluators and multiple observations per teacher.

Classroom evaluations should be combined with student feedback and data on improvement in student test scores. Combining the three kinds of evaluations offsets the weaknesses of each approach.

The different evaluation methods still need to be refined, but they're better than what most districts are using now.

Memphis Public Schools used to evaluate its teachers once every five years. With financial help from the Gates Foundation, the district has switched to a system of four to six classroom visits by both principal and peer evaluators, followed by feedback meetings focused on improvement.

The new system was implemented after teachers and administrators worked together to set new districtwide standards, and teachers and principals were trained in the new system.

"This process is neither quick nor easy. And we're still working out the kinks," said Tequilla Banks, coordinator of research, evaluation and assessment for the Memphis district. She said, however, that teachers and administrators feel the effort is worth it.

The president of the teachers union in Hillsborough County Schools, which is using both teacher and principal evaluators, said teachers have embraced the new system.

"We're new in this process, but already many teachers tell us they value the conversations they're having with their peers," said Jean Clements.

Hillsborough and Memphis are also experimenting with student surveys.

Those surveys, also being piloted by the foundation in school districts around the nation, are not popularity contests, Kane said. They focus on class experiences and ask students to talk about things like whether they are being challenged and engaged.

College professors have been evaluated by their students for years. Kane, who is also a Harvard professor, said he thinks schoolteachers could learn to appreciate that feedback as well.

"One thing I've learned is once you show people the questions, much of the hesitance fades away," he said.

Districts that can't afford to overhaul their evaluation systems can take some first steps that the foundation and the school districts say would make a difference. Those ideas include:

Better training and certification for observers, including videotaping lessons and having more than one person evaluate a teacher. Student surveys to supplement other methods of evaluation or as a way to help teachers and their mentors work together.

Meetings between teachers and administrators to start a collaboration on improving the evaluations.

Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, expressed concern that too much emphasis is being placed on evaluating teachers and not enough on improving their performance.

"Until we make a commitment to develop evaluation systems that are first and foremost about continuous improvement and professional growth, we will continue to struggle in our efforts to provide every child with a high-quality education," she said in a written statement.

Florida Voices

Miracle of Spending Cuts and Rising Grades

Monday, January 09, 2012 Lloyd Brown

Public school advocates in Jacksonville were ecstatic last week at the good news that local schools are showing marked improvement.

Nine of the city's high schools saw grades rise in 2011. Overall, 16 of 19 high schools scored A, B or C grades.

School Superintendent Ed Pratt-Dannals said proudly: In addition, decreasing the number of lower performing schools (D or F) from 11 to three shows dramatic positive improvement.

The good news came after the announcement that the graduation rate also had improved significantly.

However, the ecstatic advocates were at a loss to explain how this miracle happened.

They have been in a constant state of high dudgeon over heartless cuts to education that, they have been saying, would be the ruination of the schools.

Even worse, they say, some people are trying to foist charter schools, vouchers and the like upon the unsuspecting citizenry. Hide the children. The evil profit motive has entered the room.

They much prefer the way things were when the Democrats controlled the Legislature and would jack up public school spending. For the kids, you know.

Few bothered to point out that most of the money went into the paychecks of adults and that not one penny of it went to kids, or their struggling families.

But as those paychecks increased, the money flowing into the coffers of the teacher unions increased. Teacher unions being among the largest donors to Democrat political campaigns, that meant more campaign contributions for liberal politicians who would vote for even more spending.

Who says theres no perpetual motion machine?

During this Golden Era, grades didnt improve and by the end of it, more than half the students entering college could not read and write well enough to do college work, but what the heck?

Input is what matters to liberals. If youre putting filet mignon into the grinder what does it matter if baloney comes out?

Then, in 1999, those knuckle-dragging nitwits in the Legislature decided to try something different. They began employing standards and accountability, and school choice that is, giving poor students the same choices that politicians and others, such as public schoolteachers, have.

Suddenly, grades began improving.

Yet all we hear from The Blob is that more resources are needed (the stuff people who didnt graduate from Harvard call money.) Liberals strenuously oppose the reforms that are producing results.

So, how is it that the schools are improving in Jacksonville after these Draconian cuts?

In search of an answer, I obtained a copy of the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report of the public schools in Duval County.

On pages 128 and 129 I learned that school spending went up every year from 2002 to 2011.

The total increase in spending over that period was more than 47 percent.

The school systems accountants tell me the actual devastation for the 10-year-period, if you disregard capital outlay, was a 30 percent increase in spending.

Keeping up with growth? The report shows there were four fewer students in the schools last year than 10 years earlier.

If a 30 percent increase constitutes a lack of resources and reforms aren't working, mysterious forces are obviously at work here. Any other Florida taxpayer worried about his school districts' fiscal health might also want to take a peek at its annual financial report.

Education Week

Popular Frameworks Found to Identify Effective Teachers

By Stephen Sawchuk

Teachers who embodied the teaching skills outlined in certain popular teaching frameworks tended to help their students learn more, concludes a new study released by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The report is the second major release from the foundation's Measures of Effective Teaching project, which seeks to identify the best gauges of effective teaching. Ultimately, the Seattle-based foundation plans to devise a prototype teacher-effectiveness measure based on the findings.

Among other implications, the study's results suggest that observations of teaching practice hold promise for being integrated into teacher-evaluation systems if observers are carefully trained to ensure consistent application of the frameworks over multiple observations. Also, the study indicates that the gauges that appear to make the most finely grained distinctions of teacher performance are those that incorporate many different types of information, not those that are exclusively based on test scores.

I was surprised at how aligned all the measures were, said Douglas O. Staiger, a professor of economics at Dartmouth College, in Hanover, N.H., and one of the principal researchers on the study. They seem to pick out teachers who are good on a range of dimensions, and I think that says there really is something kind of coherent about good teaching.

Other studies have also linked teaching frameworks to student growth. But the breadth of measures studied, the number of districts and teachers included, and the focus on reliability in the Gates Foundation analysis give a richer picture of how stakeholders might create evaluation systems based on multiple measures, said Douglas N. Harris, an associate professor of education policy and public affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who was not involved in the study.

Still, he added, all of this is being done in a low-stakes context. The question going forward is to what extent these conclusions apply in a high-stakes setting.

The Gates Foundation also provides grant support for Education Week's coverage of the education industry and for organizational capacity-building by the newspaper's nonprofit publisher.

Findings Rundown

The study, *Gathering Feedback for Teaching*, released last week, draws on some 7,500 videotaped lessons taught by more than 1,300 grade 4-8 teachers across six school districts in several states. Each lesson was scored by multiple observers trained on one of several teaching frameworks.

The two general frameworks studied are consultant Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System, a rubric designed by Robert C. Pianta, currently the dean of the education school at the University of Virginia, in Charlottesville. Three subject-specific frameworks, one in English/language arts and two in mathematics, were also tested.

The scores were then analyzed by looking at a variety of outcomes for students taught by those teachers. Among the new findings:

All five frameworks were shown to bear a positive relationship to student achievement, as measured by growth on both state tests and more cognitively challenging exams, though the correlation was often modest in size.

The error associated with the instruments was quite large when based on one observation by one observer, but it decreased when multiple observers scored the lessons.

The observation frameworks showed a positive correlation with nonacademic measures of student happiness and effort.

Teachers tended to score higher on such aspects of teaching as classroom management and pacing, but lower on such skills as connecting lessons to other disciplines, employing problem-based approaches, and using questioning strategies.

The MET project's first release, in December 2010, brought some MET complaints from teacher groups, which said that the baseline measure of student outcomes—growth in test scores—was too narrow. For this study, the researchers broadened the list of outcomes slightly to include a measure of student effort and emotional engagement. Students taught by the teachers studied reported, for instance, on whether they pushed themselves to understand lessons in the class, and whether they felt happy in class.

The study also found that the observations helped improve the precision and stability of teacher-effectiveness calculations when they were combined with the two measures from the previous study: students' perceptions of their teachers and value-added measures of student test-score growth, a controversial element in many states' new teacher-evaluation systems.

For instance, the study estimated that the difference in learning between students taught by teachers in the top and bottom quartiles of effectiveness, using just the Framework for Teaching as a measure, amounted to about 2½ months of growth in learning. But when the additional factors were included, the spread between top and bottom teachers effectiveness grew to 7½ months of learning, or almost a full year of schooling.

The researchers stressed that any decision to unite such measures carries trade-offs. For instance, of the measures studied, value-added was generally the best single predictor of future teacher performance, as measured by student score gains on state tests, but it is not as stable from one year to the next as student perceptions.

There are trade-offs to what you put weight on, especially if you have goals beyond just maximizing how teachers can have the biggest impact on state standardized tests, Mr. Staiger said.

In addition to the reports implications for teacher-quality policy, its findings raise new questions about the state of testing in English/language arts. Researchers have long noted that value-added measures of teacher effectiveness seem to be less responsive to instructional differences in that subject than in mathematics.

The Gates Foundation study, however, found that student achievement on the Stanford 9, a standardized, open-ended literacy test requiring students to explain their thinking in writing, was more sensitive to differences in teacher quality than the state English/language arts tests.

The Context of Teaching

The reports authors hypothesize that most states tests emphasize reading comprehension over the important skill of writing, which is emphasized in later grades.

The findings are unlikely to end what has so far been a volatile national discussion about how to boost teachers skills.

The president of the American Federation of Teachers, Randi Weingarten, said the study shows that teacher evaluation neednt be based primarily on test scores. But she added that the study still puts too little emphasis on the context of teachers work.

They are still regulating teachers, rather than creating the steps, including asking them what they need, to improve their practice, she said in an email.

Among the MET analyses still under way is a random-assignment study meant to determine whether students assigned to teachers identified as more effective actually learn more relative to their peers.