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Sent time: Thursday, January 05, 2012 4:46:27 PM
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Subject: FW: 1-05-12 Education Round Up

FYI have a great evening! ☺

Sincerely,

Kevin Smith,

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From: Champion-Mongiovi, Jamie
Sent: Thursday, January 05, 2012 9:15 AM
Subject: 1-05-12 Education Round Up

Florida Department of Education

[Citrus schools earn B grade on standardized tests](#)

(Citrus County Chronicle © 01/05/2012)

INVERNESS All three Citrus County public high schools had enough points to earn an A grade last year, but none of them did. That's because other criteria, outside standardized test scores and routine graduation rates, were also used in determining high school grades and that criteria cost each school. Each school ended up with a B.&r...

[State gives Flagler's 2 main high schools B grade](#)

(Daytona Beach News-Journal © 01/05/2012)

State grades Volusia County 20102011 AtlanticBD DeLandBB DeltonaBB MainlandDB New Smyrna BeachAB Pine RidgeDD SeabreezeBB Spruce CreekBB TaylorCC UniversityNAC Flagler County 20102011 FL...

[Most Volusia high schools earns B's from state](#)

(Daytona Beach News-Journal © 01/05/2012)

[State Ed Watch Blog: States Expected to Focus on 3rd-Grade Retention](#)

(Education Week © 01/05/2012)

Elected officials in a couple of states are expected to take on one of the trickiest issues affecting elementary schools: how high to set the bar for allowing students to move between grades 3 and 4. Governors in Iowa and New Mexico have proposed setting a reading skill level for students to advance beyond 3rd grade, an idea they hope their legislatures will take up as they convene this winter....

[Teacher Beat: New Data on Teacher Education Begins to Flow](#)

(Education Week © 01/05/2012)

There's a ton of new data on the state of teacher education beginning to come out, and it's ripe for analysis, if and it's a big if you know where to look. The 2008 rewrite of the Higher Education Act changed many of the reporting requirements for teacher colleges, which are housed in Title II of that law. (See the embedded sidebar in this story for a summary of those changes.) Now, those...

[Editorial: NCLB Lessons - It Is Time for Washington to Get Out of the Way](#)

(Education Week © 01/05/2012)

A decade ago, Republicans and Democrats in Congress and a Republican president enacted a plan to improve our nation's schools. Their noble goal gave us No Child Left Behind. Unfortunately, this plan inserted too many Washington rules and regulations into matters that should have been left to communities, parents, and classroom teachers. The goal was laudable enough: All 50 million students in ne...

[The nation must focus on the future](#)

(Florida Times-Union © 01/05/2012)

The price of civilization is clear. Just look at the history of the United States. Its leaving your corner better than you found it. Its thinking of the future rather than focusing on the present or the past. In short, it means a focus on education. That once meant one-room schoolhouses on the prairie. Or it meant a network of land grant colleges that were focused on impr...

[Northeast Florida high schools riding high on new grading system](#)

(Florida Times-Union © 01/05/2012)

For the second consecutive year high schools in Northeast Florida rode a wave of school grade improvement largely thanks to a formula that considers more than the states assessment test. Because of the new system, it was a year of several firsts for schools in the region, according to the data released Wednesday by the Florida Department of Education. Ribault High School earned its first C grade....

[Matt Reed: New, tougher FCAT will drop school grades](#)

(Florida Today © 01/05/2012)

Savor today's news about more Brevard schools earning A grades under the state's accountability system. Next year, school grades will drop statewide when Florida applies an all-new, tougher scoring scale to the standardized tests that count for so much. Simply put, we're about to impose higher standards on Florida students to better prepare them for college or careers. That goal will be easy to ...

[12 schools prove it: They're Grade A](#)

(Florida Today © 01/05/2012)

The number of A-rated public high schools in Brevard has more than doubled, according to 2011 school grades released Wednesday by the Department of Education. Brevard Public Schools now can boast 12 A-rated high schools and combination junior/senior high schools, up from five the previous year. Three B-rated schools would have qualified for an A but were docked under the state's grading formula....

[New FCAT Rules About Money](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 01/05/2012)

I see that the Tallahassee testmongers couldn't resist dropping one last lump of coal in Florida students' stockings by "approving new passing scores for standardized tests." The Ledger's recent editorial "Tougher FCAT: Florida Gambles on Students" (Dec. 29), is much too kind and fails to identify the real culprit in the process: profit. Why is the Department of Education now not only sta...

[Charter, voucher backers to meet in NO](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 01/05/2012)

NEW ORLEANS - A national event put on by supporters of charter schools and taxpayer-funded vouchers for private schools is set for later this month in New Orleans. "National School Choice Week" officially kicks off Jan. 21 at the Lakefront Arena with entertainment including the Temptations and Ellis Marsalis. Charter schools - public schools run by independent organizations with permissi...

[Four high schools get first-ever B grades](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 01/05/2012)

BARTOW - Four Polk County high schools have earned B grades for the first time ever on the annual report card issued by the state. School grades for the 2010-2011 year were released Wednesday. The state began its grading system 13 years ago. Winter Haven and Mulberry high schools improved from D's in 2010 to B's. Lake Wales and Haines City received C grades last year. Winter Haven High...

[Fla. grades area high schools](#)

(Lehigh News Star © 01/05/2012)

A renewed emphasis on teaching reading comprehension at Lee County's public high schools paid dividends for the district Wednesday. Thirteen of Lee County's 15 public high schools earned an A or a B grade from the state, according to results released by the Florida Department of Education. Only South Fort Myers and East Lee County received grades below a B in the state's grading formula, which aw...

[Sarasota board sets public hearing on middle school redistricting](#)

(North Port Sun Herald © 01/05/2012)

SARASOTA COUNTY The Sarasota County School Board voted unanimously Tuesday evening to advertise a public hearing to change North Ports middle school district configuration. The purpose of the redistricting is to strike a better balance between the number of children attending Heron Creek and Woodland middle schools, according to School Board officials. Currently Heron Creeks enrollment is 1,0...

[Evans High earns first-ever C](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 01/05/2012)

All Osceola and Seminole County high schools earned A's or B's on Florida's school report card, and long-struggling Evans High in Orlando earned a C after more than a decade of D's and F's, school officials said Wednesday morning. Orange County high schools posted their best grades ever, with 16 of 19 traditional high schools earning A's or B's, none earning worse than a C, and Edgewater High ge...

[High school FCAT scores in](#)

(Pensacola News Journal © 01/05/2012)

Superintendents Malcolm Thomas and Tim Wyrosdick were touting the same message about their school districts Wednesday after the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test scores for high schools were released. The superintendents were quick to note that high schools in their districts did better than their FCAT scores indicate. ? In Santa Rosa County, the six high schools earned B's but had enough po...

[Slip in grades for many Palm Beach County high schools](#)

(South Florida Sun-Sentinel © 01/05/2012)

Most Palm Beach County high schools slipped into reverse or stayed neutral on 2011 report cards released Wednesday by the state Department of Education after a monthlong delay. Only four local high schools achieved a better outcome compared with the previous year, trailing gains recorded across Florida. These are the much-anticipated letter grades that are often credited with having an effect on...

[State report card on St. Johns County high schools: 2 A's, 4 B's](#)

(St. Augustine Record © 01/05/2012)

By MARCIA LANE staugustine.com Copyright 2012 St. Augustine Record. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed. January 5, 2012 - 12:00am State report card on St. Johns County high schools: 2 A's, 4 B's marcia.lane@staugustine.com Two of St. Johns Countys high schools were down a letter grade as the state released the annual high school grad...

[3 Martin County high schools see grades drop from 'A' to 'B'](#)

(Stuart News © 01/05/2012)

MARTIN COUNTY Only one of Martin County's four public high schools received an A grade in report cards for 2011 issued Wednesday by the by the Florida Department of Education, despite the fact that all scored enough points for the top grade. Clark Advanced Learning Center, a public charter high school, got the A grade; Martin County, South Fork and Jensen Beach high schools received B grades. ...

[USF Poly chief dissects spending](#)

(Tampa Bay Online © 01/05/2012)

TAMPA – The new chief at USF Polytechnic said on Wednesday he's taking a hard look at campus spending, including re-evaluating two business incubators that were signature projects of former chancellor Marshall Goodman. Interim CEO David Touchton said he plans to survey tenants and others connected with the Blue Sky centers in Lakeland and Winter Haven to make sure they're "operat...

[Weak minds dumb-down our politics](#)

(Winter Haven News Chief © 01/05/2012)

A friend of mine hands me what looks like a business card. It says, "Don't Die Stupid." As America begins another round of voting to select the next president, or retain the current one, what we need is a stupid test. Flunk it and you shouldn't vote. Evidence of the dumbing-down of America is everywhere. Some of it is chronicled in a new book, "Blue Collar Intellectuals: When the Enlight...

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Tallahassee Democrat

Our Opinion: Earning good grades

Schools improve; so must lawmakers

Parents of children in Leon County's public schools should feel pretty good about the quality of education their children are receiving, based on the much-anticipated release of high-school grades Wednesday by the state.

Those attending Chiles and SAIL high schools get an extra pat on the back for earning A grades this year. Other grades include: Godby, C; Leon, B; Lincoln, B; and Rickards, B.

Statewide result show that high schools overall improved their grades, with 78 percent earning an A or B this year, compared with 71 percent last year.

School grades are important beyond bragging rights. New residents often make their decision on where to live based on grades of schools in certain neighborhoods. Also, schools earning an A grade and those improving from the previous year are awarded special bonus money that can help offset the fact that many of their teachers have gone years without substantial raises.

In Wakulla County, Superintendent David Miller said Wakulla High School met most of the criteria to earn an A, but fell short by a slim margin based on the graduation rates of at-risk students. Barely missing the A grade cost the school between \$85,000 and \$90,000 in bonus money.

State records indicate that, of the 170 high schools dropping from an A grade to B last year, 53 did so because they didn't meet the standard for improving the number of at-risk graduates.

High-school grades are based 50 percent on FCAT scores, with other measurements such as graduation rates, Advanced Placement scores, SAT scores and the school's graduation rate of at-risk students factored in.

This is an example of the complicated set of standards that principals and classroom teachers work under, while facing threats to their job security and pay.

"I think it's really sad when you're hoping on a star to get that bonus money," Superintendent Miller said. "Teachers haven't had a raise in four of five years, but at the same time they have to pay 3 percent toward their retirement fund."

In his response to the grade release, Gov. Rick Scott said, "It is great to see more of Florida's high schools trending upward. Education is critical to improving lives, preparing students for a job and attracting employers."

Now it is important that Gov. Scott and the Legislature earn an A on their own report cards when it comes to properly funding public education as they begin the legislative session Tuesday. Mr. Scott, in releasing his \$66.4 billion budget plan late last year, added \$1 billion to education spending. This was met with cautious applause by school superintendents and educators, who saw more than \$ 1 billion cut from the education budget in the previous year.

The message to Mr. Scott and legislators should be that educators in Leon, Wakulla and surrounding counties continue to make progress in helping our students learn, despite working with fewer dollars.

If the state is serious about producing a more educated workforce, money for public education must be protected from the political shenanigans and misguided priorities that have resulted in drastic cuts and forced layoffs and even school closings in some districts.

Otherwise, state leaders will send a very bad message to educators and employers, and they can expect very poor grades from voters

Washington Post Class Struggle Blog

Stunningly reasonable achievement gap approach

By Jay Mathews

You cannot understand modern education policy without a grasp of the achievement gap. On average, low-income students have lower academic achievement than affluent students. Black or Hispanic students similarly score lower on standardized tests, on average, than white or Asian students.

School leaders say they want to reduce those gaps but are uncertain about how to do it. They should read a new book by Arlington County educators who mounted one of the most sustained assaults on the achievement gap ever seen in this area.

The book is *Gaining on the Gap: Changing Hearts, Minds, and Practice*, by Robert G. Smith, Alvin L. Crawley, Cheryl Robinson, Timothy Cotman Jr., Marty Swaim and Palma Strand. The main man is Smith, the Arlington school superintendent from 1997 to 2009.

When Smith took over Arlington schools, I thought he was headed for an embarrassing failure. He said he intended to do everything possible to reduce the achievement gap and report his progress every year, letting his reputation rise or fall on the results. I wrote that he was taking a big risk. Reducing the gap was too difficult to make it the prime issue.

He did it anyway and made me look bad:

From 1998 to 2009, the portion of black students passing Virginia Standards of Learning tests in Arlington rose from 37 to 77 percent. For Hispanic students, the jump was from 47 to 84 percent. The gap between non-Hispanic white and black passing rates dropped from 45 percentage points to 19. Between Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites, the gap shrank from 35 points to 12.

The power of the book is not so much in the numbers but how Smith and his well-chosen team of administrators and teachers did this. They made sure all staff knew how kids at all levels were doing and how important it was that they improve. There were startling differences between what Smith asked them to do and what the federal No Child Left Behind law mandated for all districts in the country.

Smith went far beyond the laws focus on reading and math scores in grades three through eight and in high school. He insisted on measuring each major ethnic group, plus low-income students, students with disabilities and students learning English, on: the percentage passing first-year algebra with a C or better by the end of eighth grade; the percentage enrolled and passing advanced courses in grades six through 12; the percentage completing the third year of a foreign language by the end of grade 11; the percentage of sixth- through eighth-graders taking electives in art, music and theater; the percentage meeting or exceeding criterion levels on the Virginia Wellness-Related Fitness Tests; and several other measures.

No Child Left Behind put all districts on an improvement schedule that made few adjustments to reality. If a school had a bad year, it acquired an unattractive label and had to get moving or risk more sanctions. Smith, on the other hand, required detailed reporting of results at all levels, but then, he says in the book, the emphasis shifted from results to recommended revisions to goals, objectives, indicators, or targets, depending on the results achieved. For example, if targets had been exceeded in the previous year and targets previously set for the next year had also been surpassed, the targets would be revised upward. In other instances, the data may have gone in the opposite direction, occasioning a need to adjust targets downward to keep their achievement within the realm of the possible.

How shockingly reasonable. Smith didnt insist, as the federal government did, that all schools strive toward 100 percent proficiency by 2014. He just wanted them

to improve. I think there are problems with measuring schools by these gaps, but Smith and his splendid team produced a better school system.

That is worth copying if Congress ever gets around to replacing No Child Left Behind.

Tallahassee Democrat

High school grades released

Chiles, SAIL each earn an A

By Ashley Ames

High school grades for the 2010-2011 school year were released Wednesday, almost a month later than grades were released a year ago.

Leon County's Chiles and SAIL high schools led public schools in the area both made an A, and SAIL increased from last year's grade of a B but the remainder of the high schools in Leon, Wakulla, Jefferson and Gadsden counties maintained or dropped their school grade. Florida A&M University Developmental Research School maintained a C grade, Florida State University School maintained an A grade.

In Gadsden County, West Gadsden High School received a final grade of a C and East Gadsden High School received an F grade, down from a D in the 2009-2010 school year.

Statewide, 78 percent of high schools in Florida scored an A or a B, an increase from last year's 71 percent, according to the Florida Department of Education.

The 2010-2011 school year marks the second that a new calculation has been used to determine high school grades. The calculation takes into account FCAT scores but also looks at non-FCAT components such as graduation rates, performance and participation in programs like AP and IB and college readiness in reading and math, explained Paul Felsch, director of testing, research and evaluation for Leon County Schools. And while sometimes a school can have enough points to receive an A grade, if it doesn't meet certain criteria like at-risk student graduation rates or FCAT achievement in certain areas it may not be eligible to receive an A.

While there were no schools that scored below a C in Leon County, Godby dropped from a B to a C and both Lincoln and Rickards dropped from an A to a B. Five out of the six schools had enough points to receive an A, Felsch said. Felsch explained that for the 2009-2010 school grade, when Godby jumped from an F to a B school, it received a substantial number of points for growth in achievement.

"Last year, Godby scores came way up, so they got what you could call bonus points," he said.

This year, he said, the school didn't get nearly as many.

Godby Principal Gillian Gregory said that if the growth points had been there again this year, the school would have a comfortable B.

"We performed very close to what the B is, and improved," she said, adding that she was optimistic about the direction in which the school was heading. "But because we didn't get the growth points, we didn't score a B this year."

Leon County Superintendent Jackie Pons said that with 83 percent of the high schools in the county receiving an A or a B, he was proud of the district's achievement.

"It is a positive day," said Pons, adding that the district was one of only 10 statewide to earn an A for nine years in a row. "We still have room for improvement; we will continue to work on that."

East Gadsden Principal Kimball Thomas said that he knew there was a possibility of a low score when he was hired in July. He said that by this time next year, when the structure he put in place in August has taken hold, he wants to see no lower than a C.

"We don't like the idea that last year's grade was an F," he said. "We are here to change that scenario."

Thomas said that this was not the grade that reflected the work in the school this year, and he was aiming for an A.

"What we put in place we are implementing with fidelity," he said. "There is an absolutely wonderful change in the culture on this campus. The teachers and students know that the bar has been set high."

In Wakulla County, the high school received a B, the same grade as last year. Wakulla Superintendent David Miller said that while the school had enough points for an A grade, the percent of at-risk students who graduated did not show enough of an increase from last year. That number needed to go from 62 percent to 67 percent, and only increased to 64 percent.

"We were 2.58 kids in that cohort group at risk group that did not graduate. If they had graduated, the school would have gotten its rightful score," said Miller. "I think it is ridiculous that you penalize an entire school for the performance of two kids."

The West, Jefferson County Middle/High School received a D, the same grade it received in the 2009-2010 school year. Superintendent Bill Brumfield could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

South Florida Schools

Tuition lawsuit appeal filed in Supreme Court

By Scott Travis

The question of whose job it is to set university tuition has been debated for much of the past decade, and it isn't over yet.

A group including former U.S. Sen. Bob Graham is asking the State Supreme Court to rule on the issue, according to the Fort Myers News Press. ([link to story](#))

Graham's group contends it's the responsibility not of the Legislature, but of the Board of Governors, a body created in 2002 through a state referendum. But the District Court of Appeal sided with legislative leaders in October.

"The (Supreme) Court's acceptance of this case will end the confusion and uncertainty surrounding the responsibility for hundreds of millions of dollars generated by the universities from payments made by student families in exchange for instruction and services at the campus level," the News Press quotes the brief as saying.

But the issue of tuition has gotten a lot trickier since the lawsuit was first filed in 2007. Since then, the Legislature has given all 11 public universities the authority to set differential tuition, which is an amount above the state-set tuition. For most Florida families, the fast rising differential tuition has been an issue of more concern than who sets the base tuition. It's unclear whether any action from the Florida Supreme Court might affect differential tuition.