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**Subject:** Foundation for Florida's Future, Key Reads: 4/28/11

## Foundation for Florida's Future, Key Reads: 4/28/11

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## NATIONAL NEWS

### **Gates, Pearson Partner to Craft Common-Core Curricula**

Education Week

By: Catherine Gewertz

April 27, 2011

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/04/27/30pearson.h30.html?tkn=USXFrg5goZqVY2AYr985Z4C%2BfWmCKFjyforg&cmp=clp-edweek>

As states and school districts grapple with how to teach the skills outlined in the new common standards, [two foundations announced](#) a partnership aimed at crafting complete, online curricula for those standards in mathematics and English/language arts that span nearly every year of a child's precollegiate education.

The announcement today by the [Pearson Foundation](#) and the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) marks yet another entry into the increasingly crowded marketplace of curriculum creation sparked by the common standards. All but six states have adopted those learning guidelines.

In a conference call with reporters, officials from the Gates and the Pearson foundations said the project will create 24 courses: 11 in math, for grades K-10; and 13 in English/language arts, for grades K-12. Four of those courses will be available for free online through the Gates Foundation. The full 24-course system, with accompanying tools including assessments and professional development for teachers, would be available for purchase, likely through Pearson, the for-profit company that operates the Pearson Foundation, in New York City.

Each course will serve as a 150-day curriculum and will harness technological advances such as social networking, animation, and gaming to better engage and motivate students, Judy B. Coddling, the managing director of the Pearson Foundation, told reporters.

#### *Expertise From Abroad*

The project is being supported by a \$3 million grant from the Gates Foundation. It's part of a \$20 million suite of grants, [announced by](#) the Seattle-based Gates Foundation today, that aim to take advantage of new technologies to build a range of teaching-and-learning tools for the common standards.

Vicki L. Phillips, who oversees education programs for Gates, told reporters that in talking with teachers, foundation officials are "hearing consistently" that they want classroom tools and supports that are aligned to the common standards, grounded in best practices, and allow them flexibility to adapt their work to each student. Those aims will guide the new curriculum project, she said.

Secondary-level courses in math and elementary-school-level courses in English/language arts are to be available for the 2013-14 school year, and the entire suite of courses and accompanying tools are slated for the 2014-15 school year, Ms. Coddling said. The four free courses—two in math and two in English/language arts—will be posted online as soon as they are finished, she said.

Officials from the two foundations also said they are working with a range of experts not only in the United States, but also from such countries as Japan, Singapore, Israel, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Australia in building the new curricula. The foundations' curriculum work joins a swirl of activity on the common-core-curriculum front. Education publishers and other groups have been working to adapt or create materials for the new standards. States and districts themselves are working on curriculum to capture the new learning expectations. A half-dozen organizations that received a previous, \$19 million round of

funding from the Gates Foundation are moving ahead with that work as well. ("[Gates Awards Grants to Buttress Common Standards.](#)" Feb. 24, 2010.) The foundation also provides support to Editorial Projects in Education, which publishes *Education Week*.

Mark Nieker, the president of the Pearson Foundation, said that one of the goals of designing the new courses, and making four of them available for free, is to spur more conversation and innovation on ways to impart the common standards.

### *Who Profits?*

News of the partnership was received with a mix of skepticism and open arms.

Kent Williamson, the executive director of the National Council of Teachers of English, said he worries that this or any curriculum developed by companies would be presented as a one-size-fits-all solution for teachers.

"We have ample evidence that solutions that attempt to be comprehensive almost always are inadequate, partly because they're not developed from the relationship between the local teacher and students," he said.

Instead of buying a full, off-the-shelf—or off-the-computer—curriculum, he said, his organization encourages schools and districts to create their own, based on their own expertise and local needs. Accordingly, the NCTE, while it has devised standards for teachers to use as guides, has purposely never written a model curriculum, he said.

"What you need is professional, well-informed teachers making research-informed judgments about how to do best in their school community," he said.

Teachers are "starving" for good curriculum for the new standards, said Michael J. Rush, the executive director of the Curriculum Institute, an Oakbrook Terrace, Ill.-based group that consults with schools, districts, and states on curriculum development. But it's precisely that great need that sparks flags of caution, he said.

"It's a little disconcerting to have something as large as the Gates Foundation, which is the biggest lion on the prairie, put this forward," he said. "They've got good quality people working with them, so the stuff might well be good quality. But people are grasping at straws out there, and I'm afraid they will just accept this as the answer without asking solid questions about what they've got."

Recently, the American Federation of Teachers had expressed concern that the country was moving briskly from standards to assessments without good curriculum for teachers. David B. Sherman, a top aide to AFT President Randi Weingarten, said he welcomes the Pearson/Gates curriculum project as part of the work to fill that gap, and said that at the Pearson Foundation's request, AFT teachers will be working on the project.

Grover J. "Russ" Whitehurst, the former director of the U.S. Department of Education's research arm and now the director of the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank, said the Pearson-Gates arrangement represented an "interesting intertwining" of nonprofit and for-profit motives and will undoubtedly prompt questions about "who profits from the common core."

Since common-standards adoption gave states an advantage in competing for federal Race to the Top dollars, and since the Education Department is funding the development of assessments for the standards, that "creates a market" for the work, he said.

"The question will be, and it's a reasonable one to ask: Who profits from this? People will have to profit from it; you can't deliver education products into the marketplace for free. But it will be interesting to follow the money and see who manages to monetize the nation's investment in common-core standards and assessments."

Nevertheless, Mr. Whitehurst said, it's good to see someone tackle a curriculum spanning so many grades, so one grade can build effectively upon another. And done well, the work could serve as a valuable lever in the industry to prompt more curriculum development, he said.

Still, Mr. Whitehurst said, it will be a daunting task to complete the curriculum systems in three years.

"They've set out some ambitious goals if they expect [the curricula] to be truly innovative and groundbreaking," he said. "It's easier to have good-sounding rhetoric about new materials, thinking, approaches, technology, than it is to do it. Ultimately, we have to see what it looks like."

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## **Proportion of Students Falling Short on AYP Rises, Report Says**

Education Week

By: Michele McNeil

April 28, 2011

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/04/28/30ayp.h30.html?>

[tkn=QMVFoXLSpw9KS1z03%2BoauqndE3Lcfp6JiYVB&cmp=clp-edweek](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/04/28/30ayp.h30.html?tkn=QMVFoXLSpw9KS1z03%2BoauqndE3Lcfp6JiYVB&cmp=clp-edweek)

The proportion of schools failing to make adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act last school year rose to 38 percent, up 5 percentage points from the year before, as the 2014 deadline for getting all students "proficient" in reading and math approaches, says [a report](#) issued today by the Center on Education Policy.

At the same time, individual states' progress toward that goal varies widely, based on the [center's analysis](#) of state test data. In Texas, for example, only 5 percent of schools failed to make AYP in the 2009-10 school year, and in Wisconsin, only 6 percent. That stands in stark contrast to the District of Columbia, where 91 percent of schools did not make sufficient progress, or Florida, where 86 percent were unsuccessful.

Those latest data from the Washington-based education policy organization comes as U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan pushes Congress to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, of which the NCLB law is the latest version.

Criticism of the law's AYP yardstick—including from Mr. Duncan—has mounted as schools chase what's become an elusive goal of 100 percent proficiency. Not only are education advocates worried about schools' failure to meet that goal, but many also feel that the measure of schools' performance is becoming an invalid tool.

Mr. Duncan, who is concerned about the label attached to what he calls “failing” schools, has warned that a huge proportion of schools will fall short this year if Congress does not act.

“Eighty-two percent of America’s schools could be labeled ‘failing’ [in 2010-11] and, over time, the required remedies for all of them are the same—which means we will really fail to serve the students in greatest need,” he said on March 9.

But getting to that 82 percent figure for the current school year would require more than doubling 2010’s showing of 38 percent in one year’s time—which seems “very unlikely,” said Jack Jennings, the center’s president and chief executive officer.

“We stand by our analysis,” department spokesman Justin Hamilton said yesterday. “And whether you think that NCLB is on track to label 62, 72, 82, or 100 percent of our schools as failing in the near to immediate future, the bottom line is the law is broken and needs to be fixed this year.”

The law sets annual performance targets for students and for smaller subgroups, such as English-language learners and special education students. In moving toward the 2014 proficiency deadlines, schools and districts must make AYP gains each year or face an escalating set of sanctions.

But federal and state policies are, in fact, making it easier for schools to achieve AYP, said Mr. Jennings, who favors a more uniform accountability standard for all states.

Instead, some states are lowering cutoff scores, which determine whether a student is deemed “proficient.” Others are allowing students to retake tests, and more than a dozen states are using student-growth models for AYP purposes. In addition, the “safe harbor” provision of the law gives schools credit for making AYP if they see a 10 percent decline in the number of students who aren’t proficient, even if they fail to meet that year’s target.

“The states seem to find different ways to soften the blow,” Mr. Jennings said.

### *Wide Swings*

The national AYP average is influenced by big swings in large states.

Between 2006 and 2010, the percentage of schools nationwide not making the grade jumped to 38 percent from 29 percent, driven by increases in four states: California, Florida, Illinois, and Missouri. In each of those states, as annual performance targets increased, more schools failed to make AYP. In California, for instance, 61 percent of schools failed to make it last year, up from 34 percent in 2006—an increase of nearly 3,000 schools.

In Illinois, 51 percent of schools missed their targets in 2010 (up from 18 percent in 2006), and the numbers could have been higher, since 15 percent of the state’s schools made AYP solely because of the law’s safe-harbor provision.

Similarly, the jump in the percentage of schools falling short nationally from the 2008-09 to the 2009-10 school years was driven primarily by two states: New York and Oklahoma.

New York raised its cutoff scores and saw the percentage of schools not meeting AYP increase to 38 percent in a single year, from 12 percent. In Oklahoma, the percentage of unsuccessful schools nearly quadrupled, to 41 percent in 2010, after schools had to clear a much higher proficiency hurdle.

Because the policies underlying which schools do—and don’t—make AYP vary from state to state, it is not the reliable, universal yardstick that advocates had hoped it would be when the NCLB law was passed in 2001, Mr. Jennings said.

As Congress works to reauthorize the law, the report’s findings should serve as a warning that uniform rules governing states’ accountability systems are just as important as common academic standards and common tests, Mr. Jennings said.

“If we want some commonality so you can tell if Idaho’s system is as good as California’s,” he said, “you have to have some common measurement.”

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## **FLORIDA NEWS**

### **Questions raised over lawmaker's push for charter school bill**

St. Petersburg Times

By: Patricia Mazzei and Christina Veiga

April 27, 2011

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/education/k12/questions-raised-over-lawmakers-push-for-charter-school-bill/1166459>

TALLAHASSEE - Rep. Erik Fresen, who sits on several education committees in the Florida House, is again raising eyebrows for his family ties to a Miami-Dade charter school company.

Fresen's sister and brother-in-law run Academica, a for-profit company that manages dozens of charter schools.

Last week, Fresen slipped language into a bill that would prohibit cities from imposing stricter zoning and building restrictions on charter schools than on traditional public schools. Charter schools are publicly funded but privately run.

The provision is aimed in part at South Miami, which recently approved charter school regulations that could directly affect Academica. The company, Mayor Philip Stoddard said, may be looking to expand Somerset Academy at SoMi, where Fresen's twin sons go to school. And Academica has expressed interest in building a school in Palmetto Bay.

Fresen scoffed at the idea that he put forth the provision to benefit his family. His brother-in-law, Fernando Zulueta, runs Academica with Fresen's sister, Maggie. And Fresen is a land-use consultant for Civica, an architectural firm that has designed several Academica schools.

"There's nothing you can do up here to specifically benefit anyone," he said. "What you're really talking about is the entire industry of charter schools."

State law requires legislators to disclose within 15 days if a vote could benefit them, a relative or business associate. Fresen, who voted for HB 7195 in committee, said he has never had to abstain from a vote because of a conflict with his family's business.

Lawmakers employed by school districts, he pointed out, still vote on the state education budget: "Those, I think, are more direct conflicts," Fresen said.

So far, the provision is not in the Senate version of the charter schools bill, SB 1546. Both chambers are expected to vote on the legislation this week.

Fresen's provision was added by Rep. Kelli Stargel, R-Lakeland, to a wide-ranging bill she is sponsoring that would make it easier for charter schools to expand. Fresen said he suggested the language because he is concerned about a "trend" among municipalities, including South Miami and Palmetto Bay, of passing ordinances he called illegal.

Florida law states that charter schools are public schools - and they should be treated as such, Fresen said.

But while school districts must meet certain criteria to expand or build a traditional public school - such as hold public hearings - charter schools are often exempt. The new provision would prevent cities and counties from setting some of those rules at the municipal level, said Tucker Gibbs, a Miami land-use attorney who is fighting a proposed Academica school in Coral Gables.

Last year, residents who opposed the Coral Gables K-8 school at University Baptist Church, which is in Fresen's House district, criticized his family connections to Academica.

South Miami recently adopted more stringent zoning rules for charter schools after Academica's Somerset Academy at SoMi opened its doors in an industrial district. The school has clogged traffic and created a safety problem, Mayor Stoddard said.

Stoddard thinks the state representative took notice of his city's ordinance because of his family ties to the school, and because he thinks SoMi Academy has plans to grow.

"He's got money in the fight. His family stands to lose a profit based on the creation of charter schools in South Miami," Stoddard said.

Lynn Norman-Teck, a spokeswoman for the Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools, said she was unaware of any immediate plans for expansion at the South Miami school.

Norman-Teck said the consortium lobbied for Fresen's provision - not because of the South Miami ordinance, but because charter schools have faced pushback from cities across the state.

"What we're asking for is clarification of that language," Norman-Teck said.

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## God, segregation, and vouchers

Florida Tribune

By: Kim MacQueen

April 27, 2011

<http://fltrib.com/god-segregation-and-vouchers>

The Florida House -- giving a long-sought after victory for private school voucher supporters -- approved along party lines a measure that would end a long-standing ban on state money going to religious organizations.

The floor of the House sounded a lot like a church during Wednesday's discussion of HB 1471, which was sponsored by Rep. Scott Plakon, R-Longwood and others.

Supporters of the bill said it would "right a wrong" created when it was added to the Florida Constitution 125 years ago. They said the initial measure was added due to anti-Catholic bigotry, although there has been little historical research to show exactly why the provision was adopted.

"When we throw God out of these institutions, we divorce values that come from our community of faith, and then we wonder why the people are godless, and why the kids are godless and why they have no direction. It's cruel what we've done under this secular humanist manifesto," said Rep. Dennis Baxley, R-Ocala.

Baxley went on to say that the support of faith organizations has helped the state drive down its recidivism rate, and that "we need their help" in confronting other ills of society.

In order to take effect, the proposed amendment would need to be approved by 60 percent of voters in the November 2012 general election.

Backers of private school vouchers have been pushing the proposed amendment for years but have been unable to get it through

the Senate. Supporters of the measure want the amendment because of an appeals court ruling that struck down a voucher program set up by former Gov. Jeb Bush. That court ruled the program unconstitutional because state money was going to private schools run by churches. The Florida Supreme Court ultimately used a different reason for scuttling the voucher program, but there are fears that other voucher programs, including the McKay Scholarship program, remain vulnerable to legal challenges.

The House debate Wednesday over the amendment turned contentious at times.

Democrats took exception to a comment that the current separation of church and state is akin to Jim Crow laws that kept blacks "separate but equal" until the civil rights acts of the mid-1960s.

"Jim Crow laws had everything to do with racial segregation and nothing to do with faith and religion," said Rep. Geraldine Thompson, D-Orlando. "So when you use the term Jim Crow laws, you dishonor the people that fought so that we could all be here together without being segregated based solely on the color of our skin."

Rising in opposition, Rep. Darryl Rouson, D-St. Petersburg, concurred with Thompson. He also remarked that "I understand religion. And I also understand that some of the most intolerant people I know are Christian."

"It's about faith, and how far does government go when it establishes religious beliefs?" Rouson said. "I wish you would vote this down today."

Just before the bill passed 81 to 35, Plakon asked the Democrats in the "back row" to join him in "righting a wrong that Republicans did 126 years ago." He said the bill would merely bring the state in line with federal law.

"This isn't about any single program. It's about whether it's right or wrong to single out a group, because of their faith, for different treatment," he said.

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## **STATE NEWS**

### **Indiana Gov. Daniels' education reform plans fall into place**

Indianapolis Star

By: Scott Elliott

April 28, 2011

<http://www.indystar.com/article/20110428/NEWS05/104280393/1013/NEWS04/Daniels-education-reform-plans-fall-into-place>

*Bills on vouchers, charter schools on way to governor*

Gov. Mitch Daniels praised lawmakers' "political courage" Wednesday after they approved the final key elements of his education reform plan.

When signed by Daniels, the two bills will give Indiana some of the nation's most comprehensive school-choice options.

One measure will let a broader pool of officials approve new charter schools. The other establishes a voucher program to let some parents redirect tax money from public schools toward their children's private or parochial school tuition.

Wednesday, Rep. Ed DeLaney called the latter bill "an attack on public schools."

"This says 'Indiana General Assembly to public schools: Drop dead,' " the Indianapolis Democrat said.

Daniels said Wednesday that lawmakers had placed the interests of children first.

"Their political courage and their commitment to a great education for every single child deserve the thanks not just of parents but of every citizen," he said. "Indiana has a far brighter future because of them."

The House concurred on the bills just three days before the contentious session must end, at midnight Friday. The voucher bill, House Bill 1003, passed 55-43, and House Bill 1002, which expands charter schools, passed 61-37.

Vouchers let some parents redirect tax money from local public schools to pay their children's tuition at private and parochial schools. Only Ohio has a statewide voucher program like the one in the Indiana bill, though some states award tax credits for those costs.

Democrats had asked for the voucher bill to be sent to a conference committee, arguing that there were contradictions between its language and language in some of its amendments.

Critics think the voucher program could be unconstitutional, and a court challenge is possible.

"I think it raises all sorts of issues with church and state that don't seem to resonate anymore," DeLaney said.

But Rep. Jeff Espich, R-Uniondale, said the bill "helps children by giving them choices. No child will be forced to go (to a private or parochial school). Only the . . . mom or the dad says, 'My kid needs a better choice.' "

Wednesday's actions by the House means all the key elements of Daniels' education reform agenda will become law.

Senate Bill 1, which overhauls teacher evaluations and pay raises, was sent to the governor Monday.

And Daniels signed Senate Bill 575, which limits teachers' collective bargaining to wages and wage-related benefits, earlier this month.

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## **School voucher bill likely dead after Tenn. House panels sends it to study committee**

Associated Press

By: Lucas L. Johnson II

April 27, 2011

<http://www.therepublic.com/view/story/f6306a9d126d48ed94ee44ef1ac82b39/TN-XGR--School-Vouchers/>

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — A proposal to create a school voucher program for students in Tennessee's four largest counties to attend private or religious schools has likely failed this session after a House panel voted Wednesday to send it to a study committee for further review over the summer.

The House Education Subcommittee's decision on the measure sponsored by Republican Rep. Bill Dunn of Knoxville to a study committee comes about a week after the Senate approved the companion bill by a vote of 18-10.

Sponsors said the measure is designed to help children from low-income families get out of failing schools and find the school that best meets their needs.

"This deals with the individual child, which ... we should be most interested in," Dunn said.

But some committee members said such legislation may be premature.

"We've got a lot of reform going on right now," said Richard Montgomery, a Sevierville Republican who is also chairman of the House Education Committee. "Right now, I think we need to study and make sure we know what we're doing."

Republican Gov. Bill Haslam has called school vouchers "an interesting concept," but he said they would not be part of his agenda this year. GOP leaders in the House said they like the idea of vouchers, but they questioned whether there's enough time left in the session to pass the bill in the lower chamber.

House Majority Leader Gerald McCormick said last week that he believed the legislation should be thoroughly studied "before we push it all the way through."

"So I don't know if we're in an urgent rush," said the Chattanooga Republican.

Some lawmakers questioned how the study committee would be compiled, and Montgomery suggested Republican House Speaker Beth Harwell of Nashville should decide its makeup.

Harwell told reporters last week that she thought the proposal fits with other efforts this year to make teacher tenure more difficult to obtain, lift a cap on charter schools and curb teachers' collective bargaining rights.

"Why take an option away?" she said. "If you could help a child, let's pursue it."

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## **Idaho teachers union sues Otter, Luna over reform law**

Associated Press

By: Mitchell Schmidt

April 27, 2011

<http://www.idahostatesman.com/2011/04/27/1625852/teachers-union-sues-otter-luna.html>

Members of Idaho's statewide teachers union have filed a lawsuit against the state, the governor and Idaho's public schools chief over a new law that phases out teacher tenure and wipes out collective bargaining over salaries and benefits.

Officials with the Idaho Education Association said Wednesday they were challenging the constitutionality of the new law. The

education association filed a lawsuit in 4th District Court that names Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter and state Superintendent Tom Luna, the two chief architects and supporters of an education reform plan approved by the 2011 Legislature.

Sherri Wood, the union's president, said teachers are challenging the law "because the Legislature, Governor Otter and State Superintendent Luna failed to listen to the voices of Idaho citizens and ... overstepped their legal bounds."

Otter spokesman Jon Hanian said Wednesday that the governor's staff had not yet reviewed the lawsuit and declined to comment anyway, citing a policy barring comment on pending litigation.

Idaho Department of Education spokeswoman Melissa McGrath also said the department was in the process of reviewing the lawsuit.

"However, it is not surprising that union leaders are trying to overturn the one bill that phases out tenure, eliminates retirement bonuses, and returns decision-making back to locally elected school boards," McGrath said.

The law now being challenged in the courts is among three pieces of school reform legislation that Luna and Otter championed during the 2011 Idaho Legislature.

The sweeping reforms generated contentious debate among lawmakers, and spurred teachers, students and other opponents to protest outside the capital in Boise and other cities across the state.

In addition to eliminating tenure and limiting collective bargaining, Luna's reform package shifted money from salaries to fund new classroom technology and a merit pay plan.

The complaint filed by the union and a pair of teachers Wednesday claims the law violates the state constitutional requirement that legislation deal with a single subject and a common, unifying purpose.

John Rumel, the union's chief lawyer, also claims the law is illegal because its repeal of an early retirement incentive program conflicts with existing and vested contracts negotiated by teachers.

"It is the duty of the courts to determine whether laws satisfy constitutional requirements," Rumel said. "We believe (the education reforms) fall well short of that mark."

The plaintiffs include Moscow teacher David Graham, Kris Teena Marley, a teacher from Pocatello, and local teacher union organizations in Fremont, Caldwell and Shoshone.

The state's teachers union is supporting efforts to give voters a chance to repeal all three education reform laws. That vote could be on the 2012 ballot.

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