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## Foundation for Florida's Future, Key Reads: 7/6/11

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## NATIONAL NEWS

### **Arne Duncan: Better teachers trump smaller class sizes**

St. Petersburg Times

By: Ron Matus

July 5, 2011

<http://www.tampabay.com/blogs/gradebook/content/duncan-better-teachers-trump-smaller-class-sizes>

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan suggested in an interview with MSNBC's Andrea Mitchell last week that one thing that separates schooling in the U.S. from the top-performing countries is while the U.S. has focused more on smaller class sizes, other countries have zeroed in on teacher quality. "We spent billions of dollars to reduce class size. As a parent, we all love small class size," Duncan said. "But the best thing you can do is get children in front of an extraordinary teacher. So other countries have higher class sizes but extraordinary talent in those rooms."

Duncan also said in the U.S. "we desperately underinvest in great talent" and said starting pay for new teachers should be \$60,000 to \$70,000. The transcript for the full interview follows:

*MITCHELL: Welcome, everyone, and thank you. Thank you all. And why don't you, those of you who want to, move down and get a little bit closer? We are honored today to have the Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. And we're talking about international competition, and why our kids are failing when compared to their peers in other countries.*

*And surveys, as you know better than anyone, Mr. Secretary, surveys show that our children start off on, you know, an even level with children in other countries. And by the time they reach the fourth grade, they start falling behind. We are failing our children. And they are falling behind China and Singapore. What are these other countries doing that we are not?*

*DUNCAN: So I'm spending an increasing amount of my time looking at these international benchmarks, these comparisons, because that's where the competition is. The competition isn't in the district or in the state or in the country anymore. It's global, global economy.*

*We actually did a conference recently with about 18 countries, either very high achieving or rapidly improving. And it was fascinating to see what they're doing differently than us.*

*A couple things from the best performing countries: First off, they get their teachers from the top third or even the top 10th of graduating classes. Finland, 90 percent of folks who want to teach can't teach. It's only the top 10 percent. So it's doctors, lawyers, engineers and teachers all at one level. We have to really think about that.*

Secondly, in part to attract and much better pay this great talent are the countries that traded off class size. We spent billions of dollars to reduce class size. As a parent, we all love small class size. But the best thing you can do is get children in front of an extraordinary teacher. So other countries have higher class sizes but extraordinary talent in those rooms.

And then the final point, where we spend more than many countries per pupil, we actually spend less on the most disadvantaged children. So other countries do a much better job of closing achievement gaps and getting the resources to the children that need the most help.

So those three themes, I think, are fascinating ones that we need to learn from and replicate here in every way possible.

MITCHELL: And we'll talk about budget cuts in a moment -- the real world. But in a -- an ideal world, what should we be paying a teacher, a teacher with a higher degree or advanced certification and perhaps working in a tough environment, in inner city, what would that salary be?

DUNCAN: So I think we desperately underinvest in great talent, and education is no different than business or non-profit or sports or music. Talent matters tremendously. Great teachers, great principals make a huge difference in students' lives. And I say you pick a number. I think teachers should be starting at \$60,000, \$65,000, \$70,000.

A great teacher is \$28,000, \$29,000, \$30,000 should be able to make a hundred grand, more than that going forward.

Principals, pick a number, \$150,000 \$200,000. If they are changing students' lives, if they are transforming students' lives, the dividends, the benefits they're giving to our country are extraordinary. Other countries are much more creative, much more thoughtful in this.

And the final thing, to your point, which so critical is not just every teacher, but those teachers that have proven to be extraordinarily talented in improving student achievement, driving students' ability up, but also who are taking on those tough assessments, inner-city, urban or rural.

Today we have lots of disincentives, very few incentives, for our hardest working, our most committed, to work with students who need the most help. We're trying to flip that on its head in a variety of different ways.

MITCHELL: Now the administration and many education reformers have focused on evaluating teachers as well as pegging their success or failure to the success or failure of their students. One particular program in Washington, D.C., IMPACT program, has shown that, in fact, some of the teachers complain. They are evaluated by these so-called master educators who don't take into account the varying circumstances. They don't take into account, well, how difficult it is to deal with the socioeconomic problems that they inherit in certain schools.

What are the problems, the drawbacks, to some of the evaluation message that we use now, that are the highlight of many reformers, that are not really looking at the individual teacher and taking everything into measure?

So I've learned a lot coming to Washington. One thing I thought was a joke, and, of course, it was true, that before we got here, we actually had states -- we had states in this country that had laws on their books where it was against the law to link teacher evaluation and student achievement. Think about that. It was against the law. Thanks, in part, to "Race to the Top" and other things, all those laws are gone. So now, as a country, we have to move to meaningful teacher evaluation in the vast majority of systems. Historically, they were broken. Ninety-nine percent of teachers are rated superior. So great teachers didn't get the rewards and the incentives. We didn't learn from them the way we should. Teachers in the middle didn't get the help they needed, and teachers at the bottom that needed to go find something else to do, we didn't move them out. So, historically, teacher evaluations weren't benefiting any adult. I promise you they weren't benefiting students.

What you have now, whether it's D.C. or a whole host of states, are working very hard with common-sense teacher evaluations. We haven't perfected this. You have to look at multiple measures. Student achievement, being an important part of that, but just one piece, looking at peer evaluation, looking at principal evaluation, looking at professional development, looking at leadership.

But what we've -- what we've done for far too long was we let the perfect be the enemy of the good. So we've had a dysfunctional system for 50 years. We have a whole bunch of folks, including D.C., who are moving the right direction. Is it perfect? Absolutely not. But it is so much better than what existed before.

We're going to be a lot smarter two years from now, five years from now. But we have to continue to move in this direction. And the best thing we can do to build a real strong, viable profession is to give teachers honest feedback, to help them grow, have great teachers mentor younger teachers and support them. When we -- when we treat teachers as interchangeable widgets, we do a grave disservice to the profession. We demean the profession. That's what teacher evaluation historically did. That's what we're fighting against.

MITCHELL: And when you talk about evaluation and testing, there's a new report from the National Research Council -- I know you're familiar with -- it said that a decade of testing has shown little to no positive effect, and has not really increased student achievement enough to bring the U.S. even closer to the level of other countries, the levels that will make us more competitive.

*The bottom line is that we're making it harder for kids to graduate in some cases. But we're not educating them better. In other cases, the kids are gaming the system. I was getting emails from teachers who read that I was going to be interviewing you today. And one teacher in The Bronx suggesting that all kinds of special incentives are added in at the last minute, where kids are given extra credit just to get them to graduate in her school, which isn't serving them or the overall.*

*DUNCAN: So when we socially promote children, we just move them along, whether or not they can read or they're proficient, we do them a grave disservice. I think that's like the worst thing we can do. We're setting them up for failure long-term. What we've seen, thanks, in part, to "Race to the Top" is 42 states raising standards, college and career-ready standards for every single child.*

*This is an absolute game-changer. And for the first time in our country, children in Mississippi and children in Massachusetts are going to be held to that same high standard. So it's going to take away the dummifying-down. It's going to take away the gaming. One of the biggest problems with the current No Child Left Behind law is it created incentives for states to reduce those standards, to dummy them down, made politicians look good, which is horrible for children, horrible for education.*

*Well, it's going to be horrible for their state's economy, but that was the norm. That is now changing, 42 states' leadership purged at the local level. We're in a new game as a country. We're going to move in that direction absolutely as fast as we can.*

*MITCHELL: And I know you're a basketball fan and, by all reports, a pretty good player yourself. But we've had now a breakdown in the labor talks with NBA. There's a threatened lockout now, today, over the failure of a league to agree to a \$7 million salary, minimum salary, \$7 million for an average NBA player. We're talking about valuing teachers. What does it say about our society that we're fighting over \$7 million for a basketball player and you have a goal of reaching \$65,000 to \$100,000 for teachers?*

*DUNCAN: Well, I think it says, as a society, we don't value what's truly important. We value celebrity, we value athletes, we value movie stars. We don't value what I would argue are some of the most important, if not the most important people in our country, the -- those are the teachers who are teaching our children every single day. And my wife and I have a third grader and a first grader. They're here somewhere and I do love watching basketball.*

*But I'll tell you, I care a lot more about their teachers than I care about what's going on in TV. And I think our society has their values wrong in some other ways as well, this being one example. But when you see those exorbitant salaries -- yes, it's great to shoot a basket, shoot a ball in a basket. Yes, it's great to score a touchdown. Are you really transforming society? Are you really helping children? Are you making a difference? I question that.*

*MITCHELL: You're in a -- in a fight with House Republicans right now over waivers and No Child Left Behind. There are some governors, Republican and Democrat, who would like to see these waivers. How do you see that playing out?*

*DUNCAN: I don't think it's a fight at all. I have great, great respect for Chairman Kline. We have a great working relationship, or Chairman Harkin on the Senate side. I've said from day one, I desperately want us to fix No Child Left Behind as a country. I don't want to go the waiver route. The current law, No Child Left Behind, is far too punitive, far too prescriptive, led to dummy-down as standards, led to a narrowing of the curriculum. We should fix it, we should fix it in a bipartisan way. We should do it together and we should do it now. So that is absolutely my plan A. And that's where I'm spending 90 percent of my time, my staff. What I have said, though, is we got to do this in real people's time, not in Washington time. This law should have been reauthorized four years ago. And right now, the law has lots of perverse incentives, lots of disincentives to get where we need to go.*

*And you started where I agreed it, I have this huge sense of urgency. We have to get better faster than we ever have. We can't have a law on the books that's holding us back. So if Congress doesn't act, then I'm prepared to move forward waivers. And these two things don't, you know, preclude each other in conflict. If I go in that direction and Congress comes back and reauthorizes, then I back off. Maybe waivers are a bridge to where we need to go. But just sitting back and accepting the status quo would be the worst possible thing. I'm not about to do that.*

*MITCHELL: I think you said that if there aren't changes made, however it is, whether it's reauthorization, waivers, rewritten, that 80,000 of the 100,000 public schools are going to fail by next fall.*

*DUNCAN: Well, they're not going to fail. They're going to be labeled as failures. That's a big difference. And where schools are truly failing with their dropout factories, no one is challenging the status quo hard enough and trying to make radical, radical changes. But I fundamentally don't think the vast majority of our schools in the country are failing. And to label them as failures when they're not is hugely demoralizing, hugely stigmatizing, unfair to teachers, unfair to principals, confusing to parents. Children struggle with that. So why are we going to do something that just makes no common sense whatsoever?*

*Let me speak for one more second why we either need to fix the law or do waivers. As I said, historically, most states dummy down standards to hit the phony No Child Left Behind cutoff score. So in Tennessee, for example, under the previous system, they said -- they said 91 percent of their students were proficient in math, because they had a low bar. They're now raising the bar. They're showing courage that raise the bar for college standards. And the truth is, with this now said, not 91 percent of students are proficient but 34 percent are proficient. That's a brutal truth but it's the truth. And I give them so much credit to having the courage to do the right thing. We have to support those states that are showing that kind of courage but current law doesn't do that.*

*MITCHELL: Now, you have said on many occasions that the right to an education is a civil right. Now, the civil rights division of your department has issued a new report from its data collection showing that too many students are not getting that right. In particular, minority students, disabled students, schools serving African-Americans are twice as likely to have teachers with only one or two years of experience. Only 2 percent of students with disabilities or taking at least one advance placement course, I mean right down the list of potential minority status. These kids are not getting their civil rights. What do we do about it?*

*DUNCAN: So I think first of all, telling the truth and having transparency. We haven't had these conversations before. On the contrary, I really encourage people to look at this data that it's fascinating. All kinds of stories there but you have some states, they're doing a remarkable job of giving African-Americans, Latino students access to Calculus and AP classes. Other states would have it very rarely happening. So this isn't about who the challenge is, it's all about the opportunities we have of providing them. Only about 22 percent of districts are providing early childhood programs for disadvantaged children. Then we wonder why we have achievement gaps, we wonder why we struggle to catch up.*

*So what we're doing first and foremost is try to tell the truth, the good, the bad and the ugly, shine the spotlight on success, challenge the status quo where it's not working. But I think most importantly, this kind of data puts the line in any myth that poor children can't learn this and somehow poverty is destiny. This is all about opportunity and we go to have high expectations, we present those types of opportunities, students always rise to hit that.*

*When we don't provide those opportunities, we perpetuate drop-out factors, we perpetuate the status quo. It's a huge variation around the country. So by having these tough conversations, laying out the facts, the good, the bad and the ugly, I think we'll be seeing more movement than we've seen in a long, long time. And when we keep coming back with this kind of information, it's going to do so much power and having transparency and being clear about what's happening and what's not for which students.*

*MITCHELL: I was recently doing an education forum in Philadelphia and that state and that city are facing hundreds of millions of dollars in a budget gap as states are around the country and it's all trickling down some problems at the federal level as you know better than anyone. What are you going to do about your goal, your vision in this climate where you've got the President and Congress fighting over really tough issues, entitlements, domestic spending, taxes, defense -- where does education fit into that mix in your priority?*

*DUNCAN: Well we have to continue to invest. Education's absolutely an investment, not an expense. But we also have to find ways during these tough economic times to do more of left. So if we sit back and wait for, you know, a better economy after the huge influx of resources, we're going to lose another generation of students. So going forth with the economy to improve, should we invest more in education? Absolutely.*

*But we're being very clear with governors and state school chief officer in districts, when you have to cut. When I ran a Chicago public school, I had very tough budget and had to make decisions. You can cut in smart ways and you can cut in dumb ways. And budgets reflect our values. They reflect our priorities. The worst thing you can do if you have to make a 5 percent cut is cut 5 percent across the board. Because what that tells you -- what that tells me is you have no idea which investment is making a difference. So if you have to cut 3 percent or 5 percent, you should be cutting 100 percent or some programs and you should be doubling down another that will really make a difference. That's the kind of conversation we're trying to push. You see some space and some districts that in these tough economic times to be very creative, doing some really innovative things. Others are like paralyzed in these tough times. So this is a test to leadership.*

*The other thing we haven't talked about all today is technology. I think education is always so slow to move. Technology has transformed how everyone interact socially, has transformed how we all do business, has led the democratic revolutions around the world -- technology has changed education about 2 percent on the margin. And again particularly in tough economic times, how we deliver content 24/7, how we deliver content on cell phones, not just sitting down in a classroom. We have a long way to go there and sometimes, you have to use it. A crisis or tough time is an opportunity to break through and not that you want a crisis, not that we want to be in such dire economic straits, but it's often the times we'll behave in very different ways.*

*MITCHELL: Especially in this place, in this tent, at the Aspen Festival, I want to ask you about music and arts which are often the first things that are cut from many public schools, especially in the cities. When I was in public school outside of New York, I was six years old, someone handed me a violin and 10 years later, I was here in Aspen on this stage with (inaudible) playing and the young people string program, and it changed my life. And there are millions and millions of kids -- Wynton Marsalis is a passionate, advocate of the arts. He had tried to do as many musicians have for in their limited way in their cities. Why can't we have a better sense of the importance of the arts in public education?*

*DUNCAN: It's a great, great point in whether dance, drama, art, music, P.E., recess, the foreign languages -- the biggest complaint I hear as I travel the country is about the narrowing of the curriculum. And again, this I really thought that you know, the current law No Child Left Behind. Huge deficits in Reading and Math, yes they are fundamental, they're foundational, there are children in need of what I call a world-class, well-rounded education, arts being an integral part of that. (inaudible) places we've walked away from that. I think we do a great disservice through our students, we need them to be engaged.*

*Not everyone's going to grow up to be a concert violinist or cellist but it gives them reason to go to school everyday, it keeps them motivated. For you it's the arts, for me it's sports. And we walk away from that, we give students less reasons to want to go to school. So we're out everywhere we can talking about a well-rounded, world-class education, we're trying to not just talk but*

walk the walk, we're putting a billion dollars and I have like 12 budgets behind what we call a well-rounded, world-class education. We want to invest -- and I will be very clear, this can't just be for high school students. This has to be from first and second and third and fourth graders. Our babies have to be able to understand, find their passion, find their sense of self-esteem to get what they want to do in their lives and if we don't do that, we do our children a grave, grave disservice.

MITCHELL: I have a same -- tell us, what about Math and Science? How can we do a better job of training teachers to teach Science and Math at an advanced level and how can we do a better job of exciting our children?

DUNCAN: Well, I think we'd have as insurance with Math and Science teachers for 25 and 30 years, and I keep saying we're going to keep ignoring the problem, we're going to fix it. Our children struggle with Math and Science because they don't have enough teachers who are comfortable with the content. And you can't instill in students the love of something that you don't fully understand yourself.

So I think there's lot of different things we can do. The President has challenged us to help train and recruit and track the hundred thousand Math and Science teachers to come in over the next decade, but I think and this is controversial, not everyone agrees, I think we should pay Math and Science teachers more money. But we have a shortage again, pick a number 10, 15, 20 grand, we need to get those people who could be going into industry and do other things. We need to get them to come into our classrooms -- and like I said before not just at high school but the elementary grades. We will never get where we need to go as a country if we don't have more teachers who are proficient in Math and Science. One very positive development is we have cohorts, a coalition of groups around the country, nonprofits, universities, folks who are doing some real (inaudible) thing or for college students who offer mid career changes who are helping us going forth to (inaudible) this, and so I think we're moving in a very positive direction. But if we'll just sort of watch this for two and a half, three decades and not do anything about it -- that's what's staggering to me. We got to behave in a very different way.

MITCHELL: You've got programs with excited young people and teach for America and other programs like it, who are reaching out and trying to serve that role, yet there are still a lot of restrictions and as budgets are cut, we still have the last-hired first-fired rule -- I know you've tried to work with the union -- how we can make some progress on that?

DUNCAN: So we're breaking through that. I encourage everyone here, everybody go on counting this, to look at the legislation that just passed in Illinois. This passed, they made it much harder to get tenure and have increased teacher evaluation. It basically got rid of last-in first-fired. If a teacher has two unsatisfactory evaluations in seven years, the state superintendent can basically remove their credentials so they can't teach in that state. This law passed almost unanimously through the help of Senate, the governor signed it, and this passed with the support of unions, the business communities, ed reformers, nonprofits - this is the new way. There's no reason what happened in Illinois can't happen across the country. So we have a lot of hard work to do with the model out there, just a tremendous courage, everyone moving outside their comfort zones. We should see that happen in state after state after state.

MITCHELL: One of the huge problems that we face in our schools is the effects of the immigration challenge, and you testified this week about the DREAM Act. What can you -- I mean the President spoke about it, you spoke about it. What can you do to try to make this a reality given what's happening in the House of Representatives?

DUNCAN: When we talk about our country's values, I'll just speak honestly, I think it's a country - we're crazy on this issue. First, it is an issue of fairness for me. We have all these young people who came here when they were six months old or two years old. This is the only country they know. They've gone to public schools all their lives, some were valedictorians and worked extraordinarily hard. They've done good community service, they've been in student governments, they've been athletes, they graduate from high school and then we say "You can't go to college." We're crazy on this issue. How is that the American dream? How is that fair?

And then secondly, we talk about, you know, two million unfilled jobs in this tough economy. Two million unfilled jobs, high-skill, high-wage jobs that they young people can actually, you know, absolutely come in, help create jobs, be the entrepreneurs, be the innovators, and we say "No, you got to go work for under-the-table cash jobs." These don't lead anywhere. It makes no sense to me from the issue of fairness, makes no sense from an issue of what's our country's best economic interest. So I'm going to continue to push every single way I can. Secretary Napolitano testified with me, the Department of Defense would love to see these young people in voluntary military, you know, come in and help maintain our national security.

So whether you look at it from the point of fairness, from an economic imperative, from national security -- why we deny these young people the opportunity to go to college is absolutely crazy. And this one's very personal for me. I've worked with a number of students like this when I ran a Chicago public school. They played by all the rules, they did everything right, they were extraordinarily talented, wanted to continue their education and see them not have that chance, it's absolutely heart-breaking. That's fundamentally un-American.

MITCHELL: Similarly, I was talking to the CEO of one of our sponsors, one of the idea (inaudible) plant for Siemens, who said that they are trying to hire people for all sorts of new jobs, green jobs -- jobs in Charlotte, North Carolina at their new turbine plant there. They're finding that the veterans are better trained for some of these high-tech jobs than the kids coming out of our school system. We are training people in the military to be more adaptive in technology.

DUNCAN: So again, I think that goes back to this college and (inaudible) standards, the (inaudible) fields, making sure our students have those kinds of opportunities again from the ground going up. And the person I met with so many fields recently

who again in these top economic times say, "We are trying to hire. We have high-wage, high-skill jobs. We don't want to send them overseas. You guys aren't producing the workers who can fill these job," so we have educated -- have to look in the mirror and say, "What are we going to do differently in this (inaudible) economy to give students the chance to be successful and to help keep our country strong, and we are really fighting to maintain our country's strength here. And if we don't educate, we don't do a much better job, I think our country is going to be in peril.

MITCHELL: In the few minutes that we have left, let me ask you a couple of personal questions. Who is your favorite teacher?

DUNCAN: I always talk -- wherever I go, my favorite teacher -- I went to an amazing school. I had fantastic teachers but my favorite teacher is my high school teacher Ms. McCampbell, and she was amazing. She really pushed us to articulate our ideas in class. There was never a wrong idea, especially viewpoints to send it. She pushed my writing to a different level and back then, we didn't have computers so we'd hand in papers in blue ink, and I get back a lot more red in than blue, but she pulled things out me and my classmates that we didn't know we had in us. I think that's the genius of great, great teachers. They take students who are strong or weak or unpolished gems, but they get them to do things and see things, and accomplish things that we didn't know we could do, and I owe her and so many of my teachers so much.

MITCHELL: What was your worst subject in school?

DUNCAN: I'm in trouble here. I always thought my worst subject was sitting still. I need to run around and have some recess but --

MITCHELL: You're not alone in that.

DUNCAN: I was strong -- the English and Social Science is not as strong as the Math and Science.

MITCHELL: And if you weren't secretary of Education, what profession would be your dream profession?

DUNCAN: Well, I've always been so lucky. I've had two passions all my life, one was basketball and one was education, and those are the only two jobs I ever had. I played basketball for four years once I graduated from college and since then, I've always been involved in education whether I was running I Have A Dream Program or starting my own public school on (inaudible) in Chicago, eventually working for the Chicago Public Schools and running it and now this job. So all my life, I've been able to follow my passions. I feel so lucky to have been able to do that.

MITCHELL: Who has a better game, you or the President?

DUNCAN: I plead the fifth.

MITCHELL: Who is your all-time favorite NBA player?

DUNCAN: It's tough, Magic Johnson.

MITCHELL: I think a lot of people would agree with that. Do you think the Bulls can make it to the finals next year?

DUNCAN: Yes, yes. My son says no. Yes, absolutely. My son is a die-hard Heat fan. So we have a family battle but I'm a big (inaudible) fan and -- a quick story. The new coach of Chicago Bulls was my coach in college, he was the assistant coach. And so I tried to work pretty hard behind the scenes to see him get the job in Chicago and see him be coach of the year, Tom Thibodeau, it was amazing. So I feel there's ownership there and a little pride and I'd love to see the Bulls go to championships.

MITCHELL: LeBron or Kobe?

DUNCAN: Kobe.

MITCHELL: And finally, your most important goal as secretary of Education.

DUNCAN: It's very simple. Simple (inaudible) hard to get there. The President is basically drawing the line with that. He said by 2020, we have to again lead the world in college graduation. So one generation ago, we led the world. It's not that we've dropped. It's really interesting -- we flat-lined, we've stagnated, nine other countries have passed us by. So everything we do, early childhood education which is so critically important, we didn't talk about that today, K-12 reform, higher education, more active, more opportunities. All that is behind the goal of leading the world in college graduates by 2020. That's what I want to be held accountable for.

MITCHELL: Finally, Duncan, I just want to thank you. This has been more fun than anything I've done here, so it's a privilege.

DUNCAN: Thank you so much.

MITCHELL: Good afternoon. For those who are starting tomorrow, we do not have a session at 8 o' clock with (inaudible), but we have another session. Check your agenda and we'll look forward to seeing you for the next three days. Thank you.

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## Job Bush: NEA Losing Battle Over Bad Teachers

Newsmax

By: Henry J. Reske

July 5, 2011

<http://www.newsmax.com/InsideCover/jeb-bush-nea-bad/2011/07/05/id/402594>

The fact that the nation's largest teachers' union finally accepted student performance as a part of teacher evaluations is too little, too late in a debate that has largely passed by an organization widely viewed as part of the problem.

The leadership of the National Education Association (NEA) voted to adopt a policy statement at their national convention in Chicago that student performance should be a part of teacher evaluations. Although the 3.2 million member union took pains to point out that teacher evaluations should be a multi-layered process and not one based simply on student standardized test scores, the move is a clear acknowledgement that the parade has passed it by.

Jeb Bush, an education reform advocate and former Florida governor, was not impressed, telling Newsmax, "The NEA has realized they lost the argument against a teacher in the classroom having a direct impact on student learning."

Bush, founder and president of the Foundation for Excellence in Education, added, "Recognizing they've lost the battle of opposing teacher effectiveness evaluations, they have come up with another tactic by which to oppose.

"It appears they will claim support for including student learning gains in annual teacher evaluations, but oppose the assessments by which student learning gains are measured. This is not a policy change. It is a diversionary tactic," Bush told Newsmax.

Andrew Campanella, spokesman for the American Federation for Children, the nation's largest organization promoting school vouchers, had a similar take.

"The NEA sees what's happening in states across the country, with elected officials openly questioning the need for collective bargaining policies that overly restrict the ability of districts to reward great teachers and terminate ineffective ones, and they're running scared," he said.

"They also see how local affiliates . . . have dramatically overplayed their hand on education reform issues, shifting public opinion against teachers' unions like never before."

Campanella also questioned the sincerity of the NEA's late entry into teacher evaluations.

"The NEA's vote to acknowledge that student achievement should be a part of teacher evaluations may seem encouraging, but it's likely just window dressing," he said. "Remember, the unions claim to support charter schools and some other forms of school choice, too. But when you get specific on the policy details, they don't really want reform, they want to repackage and rebrand the status quo. The devil is always in the details."

Although NEA Secretary-Treasurer Becky Pringle characterized the policy statement as a "giant step forward," the organization continues to be at odds not just with state and local officials but with the Obama administration. Despite the policy change, the union will continue to oppose the use of existing test score to evaluate teachers, a key part of federally backed teacher evaluations in 15 states, [The New York Times](#) noted.

In addition to pushing for teacher accountability, the Obama administration also supports charter schools. The use of student test scores in teacher evaluations is already taking place in states and individual school districts and the 1.5 million member American Federation of Teachers introduced its teacher evaluation model including student test scores in January 2010.

Regardless, the union is not prepared to abandon President Barack Obama or the Democratic Party. On Monday, the union, in a secret ballot, endorsed Obama's re-election bid, a move that will end up sending millions to Democratic war chests. Vice President Joe Biden received standing ovations when he told the union members their problems came from the Republican Party, not the Democratic.

"There is an organized effort to place blame for budget shortfalls on educators and other public workers. It is one of the biggest scams in modern American history," the [Chicago Tribune](#) quoted Biden as saying. "The new Republican Party has undertaken the most direct assault on labor, not just in my lifetime . . . but literally since the 1920s. This is not your father's Republican Party. This is a different breed of cat."

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## Kline: No Response from Ed. Department on Waiver Letter

Education Week

By: Alyson Klein

July 5, 2011

[http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2011/07/kline\\_no\\_response\\_from\\_deptm.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2011/07/kline_no_response_from_deptm.html)

Apparently, the U.S. Department of Education is not making Adequate Progress on its response to the Republican leaders on the House Education and the Workforce Committee.

As I'm sure you'll remember, Rep. John Kline, the chairman of the committee, sent a [letter](#) last week to the department asking for details, by July 1, of U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's [plan](#) to give states wiggle room on some unspecified parts of the No Child Left Behind Act, in exchange for adopting certain yet unspecified "reforms."

That July 1 deadline has come and gone and, apparently, Kline hasn't heard back from the department yet, according to [this](#) news release.

Kline's staff also pointed reporters to a June 28 report from the Congressional Research Service, the non-partisan research arm of Congress. CRS found that the Secretary has the authority to waive major portions of the NCLB law, including on accountability, standards, school choice, the 2014 deadline, and other hot-button parts of the law.

But Kline's office points to language in the report handicapping possible legal challenges to the Secretary's plan to give states on leeway in exchange for action on certain reforms. Here's the paragraph cited:

"If the Secretary did, as a condition of granting a waiver, require a grantee to take another action not currently required under the ESEA, the likelihood of a successful legal challenge might increase, particularly if [the department] failed to sufficiently justify its rationale for imposing such conditions. Under such circumstances, a reviewing court could deem the conditional waiver to be arbitrary and capricious or in excess of the agency's statutory authority."

If you're in the mood for some very wonky beach reading, you can check out the full report [here](#).

In essence, CRS says the department is generally within its rights to go ahead with waivers, but needs to tread carefully. The administration has the authority to grant waivers that come with strings, more or less, as long as those waivers are totally voluntary, meaning that states don't have to apply. But the department is on shakier ground if it tries to require states to apply for the waivers and, therefore, embrace the new policies, CRS says.

Confused? Can't blame you. Plus, CRS added a sort of all-inclusive, cover-all-the-bases, legalese caveat, saying that the success of any potential lawsuit on the waiver issue would really depend on the facts of the case, and we're a long way from that.

Another important question: Who would actually do the suing on this? States that get turned down for waivers? Congress? Education advocates or practitioners who still like NCLB? Those concerned about federal overreach? No one? Stay tuned.

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## Michelle Rhee Touts the DREAM Act

Education Week

By: Sean Cavanagh

July 5, 2011

[http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/state\\_edwatch/2011/07/michelle\\_rhee\\_touts\\_the\\_dream\\_act.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/state_edwatch/2011/07/michelle_rhee_touts_the_dream_act.html)

Supporters of the DREAM Act have won the backing of a heavy hitter in the education community: Michelle Rhee.

In an [online essay](#) posted on the website of her advocacy organization, StudentsFirst, the former District of Columbia schools chief argues in favor of the proposed federal legislation, calling it "good for kids and good for our country."

The DREAM Act, which has stalled in Congress in the face of Republican opposition, would provide a route to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who have grown up in the United States, if they obtain a college degree or serve in the military.

The famously blunt Rhee lays out some of the economic and educational arguments in favor of the legislation, but she also casts the issue in personal tones.

"As the former chancellor of Washington, D.C. schools, and as a mom to daughters who attended a public bilingual school, chances are I have come to know some wonderful children who have succeeded in school but who still may not get a shot at the American dream," she wrote in the July 3 piece.

"Immigration is not my area of expertise, but I know that the current policy has implications for our education system and isn't working for kids....No child should be forced to live in the shadows and hide their identity, nor should any teacher or mentor have to cover up the truth."

Mafara Hobson, a spokeswoman for StudentsFirst, said the essay was the first time Rhee had publicly stated her position on the [DREAM Act](#).

Over the weekend, Rhee, the daughter of South Korean immigrants, also appeared in a [special edition](#) of ABC's "This Week,"

which focused on immigration. One of the participants was the journalist Jose Antonio Vargas, who recently [wrote about](#) his experiences hiding his status as undocumented immigrant.

Rhee is a polarizing figure in the education world. She has won widespread praise for pushing policymakers to take difficult steps to improve schools and the quality of instruction. But many teachers have bristled at her steady and sharp critiques of the unions that represent them, and what she sees as ineffective teaching.

Her organization [recently hired](#) a former top Democratic party official to help with communications. The hiring prompted speculation that the move was meant to mollify members of Rhee's political party—she is a Democrat—who have been put off by her hard-edged style and her working relationships with a number of Republican governors who have pushed controversial changes in schools.

In speaking out in favor of the DREAM Act, Rhee is backing an issue that has been squarely embraced by Democrats, but which has [drawn deep opposition](#) from GOP lawmakers in Congress.

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## **FLORIDA NEWS**

### **Opportunity: Saving future of education**

Florida Times-Union

By: Editorial Board

July 6, 2011

<http://jacksonville.com/opinion/editorials/2011-07-06/story/opportunity-saving-future-education>

Opportunity: Saving future of education

It's the gap that can swallow America's future. Recently, the U.S. Department of Education released data that found the educational opportunity gap persists.

As the first installment of a two-part biennial survey called the Civil Rights Data Collection, researchers surveyed 7,000 school districts and more than 72,000 schools in an attempt to measure students' access to math and science courses designed to prepare them for college and careers.

They also examined the numbers of first-year and second-year teachers in the schools and the numbers of high school guidance counselors.

And they looked at the availability of pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs. Which school districts were operating under desegregation orders or plans?

What they found was both sad and sobering.

A total of 3,000 of the 7,000 school districts sampled offered no Algebra II classes.

More than 2 million students in some 7,300 schools had no access to calculus classes.

On top of that, they also found that schools serving mostly black students were twice as likely to have teachers with one or two years of experience than schools within the same district that serve mostly white students.

The future demands that this gap be repaired.

The opportunity gap especially impacts poor and minority students. Yet, preliminary census estimates show that for the first time, minorities are making up a majority of babies in the U.S.

Whites, on the other hand, make up the vast majority of older Americans; around 80 percent of those over 65 and 73 percent of those aged 45 to 64. Florida, in fact, is among the states that have high numbers of white elderly people and large shares of minority children.

William Frey, a demographer at the Brookings Institution, told The Associated Press that those numbers mean that the country's future labor force will depend on how well this country is able to integrate and educate a new population of children.

And he's right.

The children who are being born now will have to be productive enough to pay into systems that support older Americans. But if they continue to be insufficiently educated, they'll be a burden, not a blessing, on the future.

And it's a burden that no one will be able to afford.

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## **Duval County appeals to maintain control of intervene schools**

Florida Times-Union

By: Topher Sanders

July 5, 2011

<http://jacksonville.com/news/florida/2011-07-05/story/duval-county-appeals-maintain-control-intervene-schools#ixzz1RKMiLFAI>

*Troubled schools are improving, the district argues, and race is an issue.*

Duval County appeals to maintain control of intervene schools

Avoiding lawsuits, creating a new partnering organization and lacking a valid way to compare this year's FCAT with previous exams are some of the reasons why Duval County Public Schools wants another year to manage its four most struggling schools.

The district submitted its appeal to the state Tuesday, asking for more time to operate Andrew Jackson, Raines and Ribault high schools and North Shore K-8. The four schools are on the intervene list for consistently poor performance on state exams, and face closure if they do not improve in the next few years.

The district was scheduled to submit the appeal last week but asked for an extension to turn in the document.

*Read the appeal below the story or click [here](#) (opens on scribd.com).*

The appeal is nearly 40 pages long and details the successes at each school, current initiatives and plans for the upcoming year.

In the past four years the district has changed principals at the schools, replaced half the staff, added instructional time and increased training. For the 2011-12 school year, the district plans to split each of the four schools into two academic disciplines or houses.

Superintendent Ed Pratt-Dannals said the schools have improved over the past three years and the district needs more time to work its plan.

"We have made some dramatic changes, and if you change too often without giving it a chance to take root and show results, you're starting all over again," he said.

The district expects to hear within a week what Education Commissioner John Winn's recommendation to the State Board of Education will be on Duval's appeal. The State Board will vote on the appeal on July 19.

Pratt-Dannals said he didn't know if he would be able to address the State Board but plans to attend the meeting.

If the state rejects Duval's appeal, management of the four intervene schools would go to [Duval Partners for Excellent Education](#), an independent nonprofit created by the School Board for this purpose — if needed.

#### *North Shore hopes*

The district's highest hopes for receiving more management time lies with North Shore K-8, which will be a K-5 elementary school next school year. The school has improved its Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test scores by 89 points in the past two years and is now about 30 points from becoming a "C" school, the grade needed to exit intervene status.

The school improved from an F to a D this year.

Despite North Shore's improvement, the appeal plan shows that Pratt-Dannals is replacing principal Tarsha Mitchell. Pratt-Dannals said there was a "fit" issue with Mitchell at North Shore.

Mitchell said Pratt-Dannals' decision to move her out of North Shore was "bittersweet" because she wasn't able to complete her mission of lifting the school out of intervene status. But she said she was proud of the improvement she was able to achieve, which was more than Duval's other intervene schools.

"I support whatever decision the superintendent makes because both of our interests is what's best for the students," she said. Mitchell expected her successor to be successful, partly because of the success she and her staff have already had at the school.

Pratt-Dannals said he hadn't decided on Mitchell's replacement.

The district's high schools are still considered F schools under the FCAT score alone, but they have shown some improvement in the overall school score.

The district's appeal points out that because the intervene schools are majority black, the law requires the district and state walk a fine line in how they treat the schools in order to avoid possible lawsuits.

#### *'Past discrimination'*

The district and state face the burden of proving that taking management control away from the School Board "is not based on past discrimination and will not further such discrimination if the change is imposed."

The district's appeal questions the "credence" of this year's scores and the ability to measure students and school's gains when

comparing FCAT 2.0 with the former FCAT exam. The district points to Texas' decision to defer the accountability of its high-stakes test after a new test was introduced.

Usually the state reports student scores based on individual achievement levels and then compares the current year's scores with previous years to determine performance gains. But the state won't set achievement levels for FCAT 2.0 until next fall.

The issues around FCAT 2.0 also open the door for lawsuits, the appeal states.

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## **STATE NEWS**

### **Oklahoma reading law could delay third-graders' promotions**

The Oklahoman

By: Megan Rolland

July 5, 2011

<http://newsok.com/oklahoma-reading-law-could-delay-third-graders-promotions/article/3582945>

*A new law taking effect in August requires third-graders to be reading on grade level by 2013, or else they will be required to repeat the third grade.*

Having students know how to read by the third grade has taken on a new importance across the state, not only in the [Oklahoma City School District](#).

Third-graders who don't pass the state reading exam will be held back a grade, beginning with students who start first grade in August.

In the 2009-10 school year, 69 percent of students across the state were proficient in reading, according to test results from the state Education Department. That means there were more than 13,000 third-graders who were not reading on grade level.

[Gov. Mary Fallin](#) signed Senate Bill 346 into law this year, calling it an end to the arbitrary "social promotion" of students.

State schools [Superintendent Janet Barresi](#) further endorsed the measure by dedicating \$6.3 million — in a very tight fiscal year — to a reading sufficiency program aimed at ensuring students are on grade-level by the 2013-14 school year.

"We're pushing that money out to districts and instead of prescribing a centrally controlled one-program, we're looking at it as developing a group of different programs that will increase a teacher's capacity," Barresi said.

The money will be used to develop a variety of reading programs that districts can then choose from to help their teachers get students on grade-level by third grade.

In the past, reading sufficiency money has been used by school districts to hold summer reading institutes and professional development for teachers.

That funding, however, was cut for the 2010-11 school year, in part because some school districts were not using the money. The loss of funding impacted some district's ability to hold summer reading programs for students who had fallen behind.

Barresi said they are going to repurpose the funding to give district's greater autonomy.

"It's about increasing the flexibility of the districts to meet their needs," Barresi said.

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### **Iowa Gov. Branstad doesn't plan special session on education**

Associated Press

By: Mike Glover

July 5, 2011

[http://www.forbes.com/feeds/ap/2011/07/05/business-us-ia-branstad-education\\_8550110.html](http://www.forbes.com/feeds/ap/2011/07/05/business-us-ia-branstad-education_8550110.html)

DES MOINES, Iowa -- Gov. Terry Branstad said Tuesday he has dropped plans to call for a special session of the Legislature to deal with recommendations coming from an education summit meeting later this month.

The governor announced plans for the summit earlier in the year and said at the time he would call a special session to enact the recommendations, but that was before this year's regular session stretched to June 30, making it the third longest in state history.

"I think realistically this is a huge undertaking, that this is something we can make a top priority in the next session of the Legislature," Branstad said during his weekly meeting with reporters.

Branstad said he planned to spend the bulk of the year campaigning to reform the state's education system "to build the

consensus we need."

The governor said he decided to call the summit because standardized test scores measuring student achievement show Iowa students in the middle of the pack. In the past, Iowa students usually ranked near the top of such rankings.

"Iowa children need a world-class education to compete in this 21st Century knowledge-based economy," said Branstad.

The governor said other states are moving to reform education and Iowa can't lag behind, said Branstad, adding that he would seek consensus about needed changes.

"We need to work together to build a broad coalition," he said.

Branstad said the summit, beginning July 26, would focus on issues related to student performance and wouldn't be dominated by funding issues.

"The education summit is really going to be focusing on things like teacher preparation and leadership in the schools, student achievement, things like that as opposed to things like compensation and retirement systems," Branstad said.

The education summit will feature Education Secretary Arne Duncan and former North Carolina Gov. Jim Hunt, who made education a top priority during his tenure in office. It will also feature New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie.

Branstad said the summit will be the beginning of an effort to cross the political divide, which often surfaces on education issues.

"We're going to be collaborating with teachers and administrators and experts from outside the state as well," Branstad said.

The governor said his administration focused heavily this year on balancing the state's budget and overhauling the state's property tax system, an effort that wasn't approved this year. The governor said he'll continue to push on property tax reform, but education will be a top priority.

"That is going to continue to be a priority, but we're very much going to focus on education reform and improvement," said Branstad. "This is a high priority of this administration and I'm confident we can get that accomplished."

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## A call for 'voucher' accountability

Associated Press

By: Kevin McGill

July 5, 2011

<http://www.newstimes.com/news/article/A-call-for-voucher-accountability-1453387.php>

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — One of the architects of Louisiana's school accountability system says a state education voucher program that lets some New Orleans students go to private schools at taxpayer expense needs performance standards to make sure the money doesn't pay for students to go from bad public schools to private schools that are performing even worse.

Leslie Jacobs said Tuesday that an analysis of standardized test scores by "Educate Now!," a New Orleans-based nonprofit group she founded, shows that many students participating in the voucher program performed worse than the students in the state Recovery School District, which oversees most public schools in New Orleans.

Gov. [Bobby Jindal](#) recently vetoed language in the new state budget that would have imposed performance requirements on the \$10 million program, which pays tuition for students from low-income families who were attending failing public schools in New Orleans.

"Parents should have the flexibility to choose the best school environment to meet the specific needs of their children," Jindal said in a brief veto message.

Asked to elaborate on the veto message, Jindal spokesman [Kyle Plotkin](#) said in an email statement that the program is popular with parents and has grown significantly since it began. "It's important to note that the program is still new as the first cohort started kindergarten in fall 2008 and they are just entering third grade this coming fall," Plotkin said.

Lawmakers passed the voucher program, formally known as the [Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence](#) program, in 2008 with strong backing from Jindal. Critics said the money would be better spent on public schools; proponents said vouchers would provide a way out for New Orleans children trapped in failing schools.

Jacobs, a New Orleans businesswoman and former state education board member, said she isn't opposed to vouchers, but that accountability is needed. "The escape shouldn't be, 'Let me give you a voucher that's performing worse than the school you just left,'" she said in an interview Tuesday.

The "Educate Now!" analysis gives credit to some schools accepting voucher students, noting two — "St. [Joan of Arc](#) and St. Leo the Great — were above the state average and performed in the top five of all the Orleans recovery district and voucher schools that were compared.

But that was far from the case in all schools.

"An Educate Now! comparison of the performance of 3rd - 5th graders in the voucher program to the performance of 3rd - 5th graders in the New Orleans RSD schools shows that only 38 percent of the voucher students performed on grade level versus 49 percent of the RSD students. Statewide, 75 percent of Louisiana's public school students are performing on grade level or better," a statement from the organization said.

The group said 1,653 students in grades K-5 were enrolled in 34 schools participating in the voucher program.

The performance language vetoed by Jindal said that schools enrolling scholarship recipients in grades three or higher in the current school year, could continue to participate if they performed better than "the lowest performing twenty percent of Recovery School District New Orleans K-8 Schools."

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## Systematic Cheating Is Found in Atlanta's School System

New York Times

By: Kim Severson

July 5, 2011

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/06/education/06atlanta.html?\\_r=2&ref=education](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/06/education/06atlanta.html?_r=2&ref=education)

ATLANTA — A state investigation released Tuesday showed rampant, systematic cheating on test scores in this city's long-troubled public schools, ending two years of increasing skepticism over remarkable improvements touted by school leaders.

The results of the investigation, [made public by Gov. Nathan Deal](#), showed that the cheating occurred at 44 schools and involved at least 178 teachers and principals, almost half of whom have confessed, the governor said.

A culture of fear, intimidation and retaliation existed in the district, which led to a conspiracy of silence, he said in a prepared statement. "There will be consequences," Mr. Deal said.

That will certainly include dismissals, according to school board members and the interim superintendent, [Erroll B. Davis Jr.](#), and could possibly result in criminal charges.

The findings of the investigation, which was conducted by a former state attorney general and a former county district attorney, will be delivered to district attorneys in three counties where cheating most likely took place.

Mayor Kasim Reed of Atlanta called the release of the investigation "a dark day for the Atlanta public school system."

The cheating, he said, showed a complete failure of leadership that hurt thousands of children who might have been promoted to the next grade without meeting basic academic standards.

At the center of the cheating scandal is former Superintendent [Beverly L. Hall](#), who was named the 2009 National Superintendent of the Year and has been considered one of the nation's best at running large, urban districts.

Dr. Hall, who announced in November that she would be leaving the job at the end of June, left Tuesday for a Hawaiian vacation.

Dr. Hall is a veteran administrator of the New York and Newark public schools. She took over the Atlanta district in 1999 and enjoyed broad support. Under her administration, Atlanta schools had shown marked improvement in several areas.

Still, the investigation shows that cheating on the state-mandated Criterion-Referenced Competency Test began as early as 2001, and that "clear and significant" warnings were raised as early as December 2005. Dr. Hall's administration punished whistle-blowers, hid or manipulated information and illegally altered documents related to the tests, the investigation found. The superintendent and her administration "emphasized test results and public praise to the exclusion of integrity and ethics," the investigators wrote.

In 2008, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution began [aggressive reporting](#) that questioned the statistical probability of some test scores and eventually led to a separate state investigation of 2009 tests that showed an unusually high number of erasures.

The specter of widespread cheating caused rifts within the business and religious communities and contributed to a tumultuous school board power struggle. That disarray led the body that accredits the district's high schools to review whether the district could hold on to its rating. That review is expected to culminate in September, when inspectors return to see if the school board has improved its performance and how it handled the fallout from the cheating scandal.

Mr. Deal and Mr. Reed also made moves to control the school board, supporting a new law written specifically to address the issue. It gives Mr. Deal the power to suspend the entire school board for jeopardizing the district's accreditation.

Just how badly students were affected by the altered scores is difficult to determine; however, some 12,000 students whose tests might have been tampered with have attended remedial classes after school and on weekends.

Parents of the 55,000 students who attend Atlanta public schools have found themselves torn between defending beloved teachers who said they felt pressured to cheat, worrying about the quality of their children's education and wanting to support a district that has been improving.

"It becomes a question of what it means to be educated," said Maria Pease, a former teacher who is the parent of a high school student. "Does it mean the highest test score? I would argue it does not. This is part and parcel of a general dysfunction that isn't particular to Atlanta public schools."

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