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NATIONAL NEWS

The Latest Crime Wave: Sending Your Child to a Better School

Wall Street Journal

By: Micheal Flaherty

October 1, 2011

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424053111903285704576557610352019804.html?mod=WSJ_hp_mostpop_read

School districts hire special investigators to follow kids home in order to verify their true residences.

In January, Ohioan Kelley Williams-Bolar was sentenced to 10 days in jail, three years of probation, and 80 hours of community service for having her children attend schools outside her district. Gov. John Kasich reduced her sentence last month.

Ms. Williams-Bolar caught a break last month when Ohio Gov. John Kasich granted her clemency, reducing her charges to misdemeanors from felonies. His decision allows her to pursue her teacher's license, and it may provide hope to parents beyond the Buckeye State. In the last year, parents in Connecticut, Kentucky and Missouri have all been arrested—and await sentencing—for enrolling their children in better public schools outside of their districts.

These arrests represent two major forms of exasperation. First is that of parents whose children are zoned into failing public schools—they can't afford private schooling, they can't access school vouchers, and they haven't won or haven't even been able to enter a lottery for a better charter school. Then there's the exasperation of school officials finding it more and more difficult to deal with these boundary-hopping parents.

From California to Massachusetts, districts are hiring special investigators to follow children from school to their homes to determine their true residences and decide if they "belong" at high-achieving public schools. School districts in Florida, Pennsylvania and New Jersey all boasted recently about new address-verification programs designed to pull up their drawbridges and keep "illegal students" from entering their gates.

Other school districts use services like VerifyResidence.com, which provides "the latest in covert video technology and digital photographic equipment to photograph, videotape, and document" children going from their house to school. School districts can enroll in the company's rewards program, which awards anonymous tipsters \$250 checks for reporting out-of-district students.

Only in a world where irony is dead could people not marvel at concerned parents being prosecuted for stealing a free public education for their children.

In August, an internal PowerPoint presentation from the American Federation of Teachers surfaced online. The document

described how the AFT undermined minority parent groups' efforts in Connecticut to pass the "parent trigger" legislation that offers parents real governing authority to transform failing schools. A key to the AFT's success in killing the effort, said the document, was keeping parent groups from "the table." AFT President Randi Weingarten quickly distanced her organization from the document, but it was small consolation to the parents once again left in the cold.

Kevin Chavous, the board chairman for both the Black Alliance for Educational Options and Democrats for Education Reform, senses that these recent events herald a new age for fed-up parents. Like Martin Luther King Jr. before them, they understand "the fierce urgency of now" involving their children's education. Hence some parents' decisions to break the law—or practice civil disobedience.

This life-changing decision is portrayed in Betty Smith's 1943 novel, "A Tree Grows In Brooklyn," also adapted into an Academy Award-winning film. In the novel, Francie Nolan is the bright young daughter of Irish immigrants living in Brooklyn's Williamsburg immigrant ghetto in the early 20th century. An avid reader, Francie is crushed when she attends her local public school and discovers that opportunity is nonexistent for girls of her ilk.

So Francie and her father Johnny claim the address of a house next to a good public school. Francie enrolls at the school and her life is transformed. A teacher nurtures her love for writing, and she goes on to thrive at the school. Francie eventually becomes an accomplished writer who tells the story of her transformation through education.

The defining difference between the two schools, writes the novel's narrator, is parents: At the good school, "The parents were too American, too aware of the rights granted them by their Constitution to accept injustices meekly. They could not be bulldozed and exploited as could the immigrants and the second-generation Americans."

Were Francie around today, she'd be sad but not surprised to see how little things have changed. Students are still poisoned by low expectations, their parents are still getting bulldozed. But Francie wouldn't yield to despair. She would remind this new generation of courageous parents of the Tree of Heaven, from which her story gets its title—"the one tree in Francie's yard that was neither a pine nor a hemlock. It grew in boarded-up lots and out of neglected rubbish heaps and it was the only tree that grew out of cement." The tree, the narrator adds, "liked poor people."

The defenders of the status quo in our nation's public schools could learn a lot from that tree.

Mr. Flaherty is president and cofounder of Walden Media, which coproduced the 2010 documentary "Waiting for 'Superman.'"

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The American Dream or Dreams of the Lottery?

Education Week

By: Catharine Hill

September 29, 2011

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/09/28/05hill.h31.html?tkn=SUSFtV9E2Anlc8Qko4aXInlosawyvF37Jrxi&cmp=clp-edweek>

Our educational system, historically a major engine for equal opportunity and a pathway to the American Dream, is under severe stress. Along with it, the working- and middle-class and immigrant dream of rising out of economic anxiety is evaporating, as our public education system, from preschools through public universities, has lost broad support.

This is evidenced by declining state commitments to public education—relative to health-care and prison expenditure—by property-tax caps in communities and states that affect the quality of schools, and by expenditure cuts rather than tax increases at the federal level of the kind we just witnessed in the debt-ceiling agreements. We make decisions and deals like these at our peril.

Primary and secondary schools have to adjust by reducing expenditures, which in almost all cases translates into reduced quality and programs. Colleges and universities can partly compensate by increasing tuition and fees, but this puts at risk commitments to equal access, with lower-income students not able to afford these increasing costs.

Trends like these that result from cutbacks in government support for public education are such an unfortunate step back for the United States, a nation that came early to universal primary and secondary education, both publicly funded and free.

Of course, declining support for education at all levels has been exacerbated by the recent recession. As a result, regrettably, the state of the economic recovery seems to have become the most important factor affecting public education. A stronger economy would increase tax revenues with no changes in tax policies and family incomes, both of which would relax pressures on the education sector at all levels. And while there are major ideological debates about the role of government policies in promoting economic recovery from recession, we can perhaps agree that the government should avoid making matters worse through the kind of political squabbling that led to the summer's debt-ceiling crisis and the uncertainty it inflicted on the economy.

Amidst their squabbling, Democrats and Republicans repeatedly invoke the power and importance of the American Dream in sustaining our future prosperity. But the American Dream is quietly and unconsciously being replaced by dreams of winning the lottery for many in America. The share of national income earned by the top 1 percent of U.S. families has increased from about 8 percent in 1974 to more than 18 percent in 2007.

This has not been a story of a rising economic tide lifting all boats in the United States over this time period. Other countries have experienced similar economic growth, without the increase in income inequality: The increased inequality was not a precondition for our economic growth, but a policy choice. I fear that we will only reinforce our growing income disparity if our long-term governmental approach becomes avoiding revenue increases by making cuts in areas such as education.

Education confers on individuals both personal and financial benefits. As we know, people with more education earn more and

are less likely to be unemployed. Unequal access to educational opportunities among different members of our society, particularly by income, significantly erodes our commitment as a nation to the concepts of equal opportunity and socioeconomic mobility.

In this light, consider the consequences of data released this year on comparative international educational standards, which suggests that we are falling further behind other countries in reading, math, and science education—our generation's Sputnik moment, according to President Obama. This is something the wealthy can protect themselves from, sending their children to private K-12 schools. Not so for people of more modest means. They have significantly fewer options, relying primarily on their local public schools. And low-income students are then less likely to go on to college, even factoring for academic ability. This is why there's so much at stake when cost-cutting on key social investments, such as public education, becomes a political habit during difficult economic times.

And at this time when the income disparity in our country is already growing, increasing inequality will ultimately put pressure on the social cohesion of our nation. Commitment to our country's institutions and egalitarian values depends on individuals feeling that these institutions and values serve their interests and welfare. There's no more crucial example than our education system, which history has shown to be America's most effective engine for greater social equality and a real path to the American Dream.

Catharine Hill, a higher education economist, is the president of Vassar College, in Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

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Changes Proposed for Reporting by Teacher Education Programs

New York Times

By: Sam Dillon

September 30, 2011

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/01/education/01brfs-CHANGESPROPO_BRF.html?_r=2

Secretary of Education [Arne Duncan](#), proposing changes to the nation's teacher education programs on Friday, said the [Education Department](#) would negotiate changes to the rules governing what information the nation's 1,400 teachers' colleges and university programs must report to Washington. The department wants them to report how many graduates fill shortage positions, like teaching math in high-poverty schools; how satisfied school principals are with their preparation; and how much the graduates help students learn once they get to the classroom, based on their students' test scores. The rule-rewriting process could take many months.

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FLORIDA NEWS

Educators outline plan to improve Hispanic graduation rate

Miami Herald

By: Michael Vasquez

September 30, 2011

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/09/30/2433173/educators-outline-plan-to-improve.html>

President Barack Obama and others have called for the United States to dramatically increase its number of college graduates, but a report released by the College Board on Friday warns that America's Hispanic students — now the largest minority in K-12 public schools — are significantly trailing their classmates when it comes to attaining degrees. Unless that trend changes, the report states, the nation's competitiveness in the world economy will suffer.

"We know these students have the needed capabilities," said College Board President Gaston Caperton. "But they need more support, and they need more encouragement."

Caperton's remarks came at a report unveiling held at Miami Dade College's Wolfson Campus, which was followed by a roundtable discussion that included a who's-who of politicians and education leaders.

Among them: former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, State University System Chancellor Frank Brogan, two members of the Florida Legislature, and representatives from Hispanic advocacy groups such as the National Council of La Raza and Excelencia in Education.

The unveiling's location in Florida, and at Miami Dade College in particular, was no accident. MDC is nationally respected as a high-quality institution that graduates impressive numbers of Hispanic students, many of them low-income.

Florida, meanwhile, boasts the nation's third-largest Hispanic population, and has significantly outperformed other states when it comes to Hispanic degree attainment. Nationally, only about 19 percent of Hispanics aged 25 to 34 have earned an associate's degree or higher, but in Florida that number rises to 28.5 percent.

That's not to say Florida's gains have completely closed the achievement gap — the national degree attainment rate for all students is roughly 41 percent, meaning that Hispanics here are still crossing the graduation stage less frequently than young

adults as a whole.

To boost Hispanic degree attainment in Florida and across the country, the College Board outlined a 10-point plan that schools and government can use to improve student achievement. Among the plan's highlights:

- Create a program of voluntary preschool education that is available to low and moderate-income families, as less than 39 percent of America's Hispanic children were enrolled in pre-K programs between 2006 and 2008. This is one area where Florida, which began offering pre-K in 2005, is ahead of other states, though critics have questioned the quality of Florida's program during its early years.
- Raise K-12 standards and requirements with an eye toward college preparation. Florida has taken several steps in this direction, such as when state leaders last year added algebra 2, biology, and chemistry or physics to the list of courses required to receive a high school diploma. The changes are being phased in over a several-year period.
- Provide more need-based grant aid to students. Here, Florida has some real catching up to do. While most states make need-based grants their top priority, the lion's share of Florida's financial aid budget in recent years has been spent on Bright Futures scholarships. While some needy students receive Bright Futures, the awards disproportionately benefit middle and upper-income families.

At the report's unveiling, former Gov. Bush said Florida has been a "leader" in awarding merit aid because of Bright Futures, but that it is time for need-based aid to get more attention.

"The worst case that you can imagine is that you do all this hard work in the K-12 system and then kids can't access quality education because they don't have the money to be able to pursue it," Bush said.

In the roundtable discussion that followed, speakers touched on a variety of proposals to increase the number of Hispanic degree-holders — from doing a better job of engaging students' parents and other family to reworking the formula used to fund Florida's community colleges and universities.

Right now, that formula focuses on enrollment, but state lawmakers and Brogan, the state university system chancellor, raised the possibility of linking university funding to the number of degrees awarded to students.

"If they come away without the brass ring, they're diminished in their ability to live the dream," Brogan said.

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Education mandate for online class puts pressure on Florida's rural districts

St. Petersburg Times

By: Bill Maxwell

September 30, 2011

<http://www.tampabay.com/opinion/columns/education-mandate-for-online-class-puts-pressure-on-floridas-rural/1194575>

Gov. Rick Scott signed into law legislation that requires high school students to take at least one online class to graduate. The measure seems benign, but it will unduly stress districts that do not have deep pockets and other resources.

Florida legislators have strapped school districts with yet another expensive unfunded mandate. Gov. Rick Scott signed into law this year legislation that requires high school students to take at least one online class to graduate. The law went into effect this term and affects incoming freshmen.

The measure seems benign at first blush, but it will unduly stress districts that do not have deep pockets and other resources.

School district officials I have spoken with around the state see nothing wrong with the intent of the new law. The digital age is here to stay, and its demands are inescapable, affecting every corner of education and life in general. Students headed to college will be expected to be computer-savvy and independent enough to conduct research and complete courses online. In the workplace, employees have to take webinars and other computer-based training to keep their jobs.

The problem for many districts is that they now must spend money they do not have on new computer labs so that students who lack Internet access at home can satisfy the online course requirement. This is certainly true for rural districts that rarely have sufficient dollars for anything, and Tallahassee is doing next to nothing to help them offset the costs of computers and lab space.

Rural Highlands County, which has 11,952 students, is a prime example of a district facing hardship. J. Ned Hancock, a Highlands school board member, told *Highlands Today* that under the new law, students who do not have computers at home will have great difficulty fitting everything that is required, such as homework or a missed assignment, into one class period in on-campus computer labs.

He said the district is seeking help from the federal Race to the Top program that has funds slated for technology. If the Race to

the Top application fails, officials do not know what they will do.

Highlands plans to implement tutoring sessions after school on Wednesdays and from 8 a.m. to noon on Saturdays when computers will be available for students to complete their online classes. The sessions are after-hours and not required, and officials are hoping students will attend voluntarily.

Unlike the Highlands County district and some large urban ones, Pinellas County, the nation's 24th-largest district with 101,000 students, does not foresee serious problems complying with the new law.

"This is a trend Pinellas County schools really saw coming, and even before the mandate, we have been attempting to bridge the digital divide that exists for those students who do not have access at home," John Just, the district's assistant superintendent for management information systems, wrote in an e-mail message. "With an Enhancing Education through Technology program competitive grant we received last year, we were able to equip some of our neediest high schools with equipment for before- and afterschool programs to access online courses from Florida Virtual School or Pinellas Virtual School."

Just said the district also has been working with local community organizations such as public libraries to train their staff members on the school district's computer system. The goal is to ensure that people outside the schools can help students with their online requirements and be willing to give students priority access to their services.

Last spring, Lakewood High's Center for Advanced Technologies offered students a semesterlong course in computer applications in science and mathematics. Those who succeeded received a quality point toward their grade-point average and a half credit toward the 24 credits needed for graduation.

"Online classes can be a very powerful tool for students, and we are committed to all students having access," Just said.

He knows, too, that Pinellas and a handful of other large districts will not suffer like rural districts in trying to comply with the state's newest unfunded mandate for public education.

"Times are very tight," he said, "and that means being very creative."

While rural leaders such as Highlands County's Hancock may envy districts with the wealth to be creative, he knows that being creative is difficult when the public coffers are low and probably will remain low for a long time.

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Florida Legislature might consider further expansion of corporate tax credit scholarships

St. Petersburg Times

By: Jeff Solochek

September 30, 2011

<http://www.tampabay.com/blogs/gradebook/content/florida-legislature-might-consider-further-expansion-corporate-tax-credit-scholarships>

They did it last year. And there's talk that Florida lawmakers might do it again.

"There may be an opportunity to expand the corporate tax scholarship fund," said House speaker-in-waiting Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel.

The demand is proven, he told the Gradebook.

"There's still a waiting list" of students requesting the vouchers, he said. "There's still a cap on the amount. People like myself and others are saying, You've got 1000's of kids who want to be in the Step Up For Children program but because of the cap they are unable. Let's fix that."

Critics have complained that the program funnels money away from the public schools. Those critics don't include the low-income parents who use the scholarships, though, Weatherford observed.

"I've never had a single parent come up to me and say, 'Look, this is a problem,'" he said.

If the change can be made without fiscal impact -- something Weatherford argues is possible because the scholarships are less than state per-student funding for public school -- look for this to happen. But if it's not at least revenue neutral, maybe not.

Committees resume their meetings again next week. Stay tuned.

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STATE NEWS

North Carolina Grooms Its Best Students to Be Good Teachers

New York Times

By: Michael Winerip

October 2, 2011

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/03/education/03winerip.html?_r=1&ref=education

DURHAM, N.C. — When Mr. Williams means business, he is not kidding around. “He’s pretty quiet, pretty serious,” said Ashabur Rahman, a fifth grader at Glenn Elementary School who has him for math and science.

John Williams III, 36, is not some jokey teacher. “At the start of the year, some kids said he was going to be the meanest teacher in the school,” said Trajen Womack. Chelsea Parra, heard the same: “A lot of people were saying it.”

Nor is he easy about giving out 1’s, the top grade. “If we’re joking, he doesn’t say anything, but on the progress report, he’ll give you a 3,” Trajen said.

Still, the more time they spent with Mr. Williams, the smarter he seemed to get. In science, they made terrariums, growing rye, mustard and alfalfa. There is no running water in the trailer behind the school where Mr. Williams teaches, so he carries it in, using jugs. This week, the students will add crickets and roly-polies to their ecosystems.

He always calls them ladies and gentlemen, and speaks so softly that they must be quiet to hear him; even a little noise sounds loud in Mr. Williams’s room.

Last week, during a lesson on common denominators, a new boy began tapping on his desk. Mr. Williams ignored it and kept teaching. The boy sat on the floor, twirled a ruler and wandered around talking to other students. Mr. Williams kept teaching. When the boy could no longer be ignored — he knocked over a chair — Mr. Williams made eye contact with a special education teacher, who took over the class. Mr. Williams went and sat by the boy.

In a voice so quiet that Citlaly Reynoso, who was sitting next to them, could not hear, he talked to the boy for several minutes. Then Mr. Williams took over the class again, and the boy pulled out a workbook and started answering questions.

Later Mr. Williams, who has spent 14 years teaching poor children, said: “I want to do everything I can to keep that child in class. If he’s sitting in the principal’s office, he’s not learning.”

In 1993, when Mr. Williams graduated from high school in Goldsboro, N.C., with an A average and a 1,320 on his SATs, he had many options, but he chose the [North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program](#). The idea is simple: the state pays top academic students to attend a public college, and in return they spend at least four years teaching in a public school.

In the 20 years since the first fellows began teaching, the program has flourished. High school seniors selected for the program average about 1,200 on the SATs compared with a state average of 1,000. Of the 500 fellows chosen each year, about a quarter are black or Hispanic.

Mr. Williams said that once he was accepted, colleges competed for him. “They woo you like an athlete,” he said. “We got the star treatment.”

It is not enough for the smartest to become teachers; they have to stay teaching. Research has shown that experienced teachers perform far better than beginners. A [Carolina Institute for Public Policy](#) study by Gary T. Henry, Charles Thompson and Kevin Bastian in 2010 [found that of a dozen training programs](#) in the state, Teach for America had the best test results, with the Teaching Fellows Program second.

There is, however, a large difference in retention. Teach for America requires only a two-year commitment. After five years, 7 percent of the Teach for America participants were still at work in North Carolina, versus 73 percent of the fellows. Sixty percent of the fellows who started teaching 20 years ago still work in North Carolina public schools.

Representative David E. Price, Democrat of North Carolina, tried for years to get Congress to pass legislation using the Teaching Fellows Program as a national model, and finally succeeded a few years ago. But financing has been limited. New York, one of 12 states that won a grant, received enough money to prepare only 125 teachers over five years.

It is a pretty good bet that any program that treats teachers like star athletes is not going to last. A few months ago, as part of hundreds of millions of dollars in cuts, the North Carolina General Assembly voted to phase out the fellows program — which has a \$13 million annual budget — over the next few years. ([There have been reports](#) that the House speaker, Thom Tillis, a Republican, is reconsidering; his office did not respond to several calls and e-mails.)

It may not matter. Budget cuts have been so severe, pretty soon no one is going to be able to afford to teach. Anthony White, 26, another fellow, has been a math teacher for five years at [Southern High School](#) here. Like Mr. Williams, he had his choice of jobs but chose a school that serves a poor black neighborhood, a place where he felt that his work would stand for more. “Coming up,” Mr. White said, “I never had a black male math teacher.”

When Mr. White started, he was making \$35,000, and five years later he is still making \$35,000.

It has been said before: no one goes into teaching for the money, and any glory is mighty modest.

Last spring, when Mr. Williams [was named Teacher of the Week by WRAL-TV](#) in the Raleigh-Durham area, the reporter referred to him as “a humble John Williams.”

Most of the great things that teachers do are not seen by adults, and are taken for granted by children.

The new boy in Mr. Williams’s class closed the workbook after a few minutes and put his head on the desk. A guidance counselor had warned Mr. Williams to be on guard; the boy’s father had died the week before. When everyone filed out for recess, Mr. Williams held him back and spoke to him gently. The boy kept his back to him the entire time. When Mr. Williams told him to go play, the boy walked away backward, stopping at the bottom of a grassy hill that leads to the playground.

Mr. Williams moved up the hill a little and the boy followed, then stopped. Mr. Williams walked up a little more, the boy followed and stopped. From a distance, it looked like Mr. Williams was tugging him up the hill with an invisible rope.

Dressed in a bow tie, stylish shirt and creased pants, Mr. Williams looked thoroughly out of place on that hill. With one final tug, he got the boy to the top. For a while, the boy stood with his back to everyone, then for no apparent reason he ran off, disappearing into the crowd of excited, noisy children.

Mr. Williams made his way back down the hill slowly, so as not to trip. When he got to the bottom, he said, “Hopefully, he’s out there enjoying himself.”

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Illinois charter school commission gets 9 members

Associated Press

By: Staff

October 1, 2011

<http://washingtonexaminer.com/news/2011/10/ill-charter-school-commission-gets-9-members>

The Illinois State Board of Education has approved nine members of the newly created State Charter School Commission.

The commission will authorize new charter schools throughout Illinois and hear appeals from schools whose applications were denied, among other duties.

The panel was established by legislation passed earlier this year.

The nine members include business leaders, educators and education advocates from across the state.

The board of education has recommended that Greg Richmond chair the commission. He’s the president and CEO of the Chicago-based National Association of Charter School Authorizers.

Board members’ terms will begin Nov. 1 and initially run for two-, three- or 4-year staggered terms.

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Tennessean Governor Haslam boosts Tennessee's education profile

The Tennessean

By: Chas Sisk and Julie Hubbard

October 1, 2011

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20111001/NEWS/310010047/Haslam-boosts-TN-s-education-profile>

No Child, tenure issues highlight effort

Gov. Bill Haslam has thrust Tennessee’s efforts to reform its education system into the national spotlight with a pair of high-profile appearances, drawing attention while also tying his image to the state’s performance.

Stressing state-by-state flexibility and higher standards for students and teachers, Haslam has stood with President Barack Obama in recent days to support waivers from the federal No Child Left Behind law and taken part in a televised two-day summit on education reform organized by NBC News.

The appearances follow testimony in July by Tennessee Education Commissioner Kevin Huffman before Congress; an August visit to the state by U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan; and recent decisions by education reformers Chris Barbic, a Houston charter school operator, and Michelle Rhee, the former Washington, D.C., schools chief and Huffman’s ex-wife, to relocate to Tennessee at least part time.

The underlying theme behind all these developments: By linking teacher tenure and job evaluations to student performance, lifting restrictions on charter schools and bolstering requirements for a high school diploma, Tennessee has become a national leader in education reform.

“I think it’s recognition of all the work we’ve done in Tennessee,” Haslam said.

The reform effort began more than a year before Haslam took office. Gov. Phil Bredesen pushed through new performance evaluations and new procedures for taking over failing schools as part of the state's application to the Race to the Top program, which won \$501 million in federal funding. Haslam has followed with new tenure rules, and he signed a bill that reduced the power of the state's biggest teachers union, the Tennessee Education Association. His hiring of Huffman, an executive with Teach for America, also signaled a focus on reform.

"We focused on governors who were doing significant work in education," NBC spokeswoman Meghan Pianta said. "Gov. Haslam is one of those governors."

Travel costs taxpayers

The appearances have come at some expense to taxpayers. Huffman's testimony before Congress in July cost about \$1,276 for a last-minute plane ticket, according to a spokeswoman.

Haslam's trip to New York to participate in NBC's Education Nation summit cost about \$1,500, including flights and lodging for the governor, his wife, staffers and security detail. His White House appearance with Obama cost the state nothing because the governor traveled to the event on a private plane owned by Pilot, his family's chain of truck stops, and did not stay overnight, a spokesman said.

Relationship solidified

The appearances have solidified the relationship between education officials in Washington and Nashville. Obama and other federal officials have stressed that waivers from No Child Left Behind will go only to states that are showing progress at reform, but they also have indicated that they consider Tennessee among those states.

"This work is extraordinarily tough and complicated and difficult, and there is a reason why many places don't progress, frankly," Duncan told *The Tennessean* in August. "I see a set of things here that make me very, very hopeful and optimistic. You have a governor not just talking the talk, but walking the walk."

Such statements elevate Tennessee's and Haslam's statures among education reformers, but the endorsements have their limits, said Jerry Winters, lobbyist for the TEA.

"It's always good to see Tennessee on the national stage, but I think it's premature to call what's happened in Tennessee reform," Winters said. "It's change. There's no doubt it's change. But 'reform' is something that shows results."

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