

From: Sarah Powell (Sarah@afloridapromise.org) <sarah@afloridapromise.org>
To: Undisclosed recipients:
CC:
Date: Thu, 3/1/2012 2:03:18 PM
Subject: Foundation for Florida's Future, Key Reads: 03/01/12

Foundation for Florida's Future, Key Reads: 03/01/12

For more education news, visit *The Ed Fly* at www.TheEdFly.com.

NATIONAL NEWS

- 1) [26 States Plus D.C. Apply for NCLB Waivers in Second Round](#); McNeil – Education Week
- 2) [Report: Charter Schools Have Lasting Impact in Rural America](#); Birch – Education News

STATE NEWS

- 3) [Florida: Opinion: Bill would keep parents better informed](#); Webber – Orlando Sentinel
- 4) [Gov. Haslam Talks Tennessee Education](#); Smith – MyFox Memphis
- 5) [Illinois: Tech companies welcome plan to open six-year high schools](#); Guy – Chicago Sun-Times
- 6) [First-Graders Read, Write, and Tweet in Illinois Classroom](#); Manchir – The Chicago Tribune

NATIONAL NEWS

26 States Plus D.C. Apply for NCLB Waivers in Second Round

Education Week

By: Michele McNeil

February 29, 2012

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2012/02/states_apply_for_waivers_in_se.html

Twenty six more states, plus the District of Columbia, are applying for waivers under the No Child Left Behind Act, which would free them from many of the core tenets of the law in exchange for adopting key reforms backed by the Obama administration. Already, 11 states have won this new flexibility.

Those applying are: Arkansas, Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin, along with D.C.

States seeking flexibility in the second round will be notified later this spring. The U.S. Department of Education expects additional states to request flexibility by Sept. 6 for the third round of review.

That leaves the following states that have not applied for a waiver: Alabama, Alaska, California, Hawaii (a troubled Race to the Top state!), Maine, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Texas, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

New Hampshire and Maine [have already said](#) they need more time to figure out how to make the [waiver requirements](#) work in their rural states. Other states, like California, have already made their skepticism [very clear](#).

Given that the Education Department [approved all 11 requests](#) for waivers from the first round, it seems very likely the vast majority of these requests will be approved at some point. (Although certainly the department [will seek changes](#) before doing so.) Many states that have applied in this second round have posted their applications on their individual department websites. As soon as the federal Education Department posts copies of all application in one place, we'll post a link.

[\(Back to top\)](#)

Report: Charter Schools Have Lasting Impact in Rural America

Education News

By: B.A. Birch

February 29, 2012

<http://www.educationnews.org/education-policy-and-politics/report-charter-schools-have-lasting-impact-in-rural-america/>

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools has released its latest Issue Brief – [Beyond City Limits: Expanding Public Charter Schools in Rural America](#) – in an attempt to highlight the studied benefits of charter schools in rural districts.

This comes as many rural lawmakers battle with [the ongoing difficulties of teaching in remote areas](#) including budget

constraints, course offerings, recruitment, special education resources, and transportation. And as they look to idea of enacting charter school laws, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools new brief may come as food for thought.

The brief is a guide for policymakers, charter support organizations, and communities that want to offer [high-quality options that can meet the educational needs of rural students](#).

The brief looks to various challenges faced in rural public education and analyzes the key hurdles that must be overcome in order to launch a successful public charter school in a small community.

Ursula Wright, interim president and CEO of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools said:

"Rural students comprise a vital segment of the American public education system; however, their educational needs are not being met.

"One in four students, which equates to over 11 million children, attend rural public schools and one in five of the nation's lowest performing schools are in rural areas. There is a real focus required to ensure rural schools are meeting the academic needs of their students and charter schools can help by providing high-quality options."

In 2009-10, charter schools in rural areas consisted of 16 percent of the number of charter schools nationwide, however in the same period 33 percent of all traditional state schools were in rural districts.

There are a number of ways that policymakers and charter support organizations can help expand high-quality charter schools in rural communities, says the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

"For policymakers, laws allowing for public charter schools and then equitable funding of those schools must be at the forefront.

"The further development of rural charter schools is contingent upon lawmakers setting a level playing field that is conducive to growth. State charter support organizations are instrumental in making sure that rural communities are well-informed on the potential benefits of charter schools."

[\(Back to top\)](#)

STATE NEWS

Florida: Opinion: Bill would keep parents better informed

Orlando Sentinel

By: Melissa Webber

February 28, 2012

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/opinion/os-ed-empowered-parents-myword-022812-20120227,0,6070483.story>

As a parent, I want more choices when it comes to my children's education. So I'm supporting The Parent Empowerment Act, a bill with bipartisan support working its way through the Florida Legislature.

This bill requires that school districts inform us when our children's teacher has been declared ineffective or if the entire school is failing. Parents want that information, in order to make a better choice for their kids. We deserve to know options exist, like an online classroom or the opportunity to come together with other parents and save a struggling school.

Politicians and educators are always talking about the importance of good parenting and involved moms and dads. Here is an opportunity to encourage us to get involved in our neighborhoods, bring a failing school back to life, and show our kids that we all believe education is important. This bill is a huge step forward in giving parents the power to effect positive change for schools and thus, the future of our kids.

I am the parent of two children in Florida's public-school system. My son is an eighth-grader in a self-contained ESE unit, and my daughter is a fifth-grade honor student. While their needs vary, they both require my daily involvement in their education and advocacy on a regular basis.

Fortunately, we have had high-performing schools and excellent teachers for them thus far, but we have many years ahead of us before graduation.

Unfortunately, many parents are challenged with struggling schools. Often, those parents' concerns fall on deaf ears of the district. Parents' choices for their children are not motivated by budgets or politics, but by improving educational opportunities for their kids. They should have the right to be heard and to choose options they believe will best serve their children in an effort to help resolve issues when their children's school is struggling.

Parents should also have the right to know about the school and classroom their child will be in each year. As parents, we put the education of our children in the hands of schools and teachers we often have little information about. We should have access to complete information about the teachers and schools educating our kids — including evaluation data. This bill gives parents the information and power we need to secure a great education for our kids.

Florida parents should join me in supporting the Parent Empowerment Act. We need to work together to improve education for our kids.

Melissa Webber lives in West Melbourne.

[\(Back to top\)](#)

Gov. Haslam Talks Tennessee Education

MyFox Memphis

By: Les Smith

February 29, 2012

<http://www.myfoxmemphis.com/dpp/news/tennessee/haslam-talks-tennessee-education-rpt-20120229>

Memphis, Tn - Making a mid-week Memphis appearance in support of the Books From Birth reading program, Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam and wife Chrissie, enjoyed their interaction with a group of bright Headstart students at the Benajmin L. Hooks Library.

While he complimented the students for their attentiveness, the results of a recently released state-wide opinion poll would indicate Tennesseans are just as appreciative of Haslam's strides in promoting educational reform, to the tune of a 72 percent approval rate.

In a mini-news conference a confident Haslam says he'll be keeping a keen eye on the progress made as the state managed Achievement School District takes over operations of six of the Bluff City's failing schools. Yes, desperate times do sometimes call for desperate measures.

"The achievement gap we have between lower income kids and middle income kids...I said before, you can almost deem it sinful. It's just wrong. And we have to have specific, maybe even dramatic steps to advance that," said Haslam. "We're going to hold our own Achievement School District just as accountable as we're holding everyone else. I'm encouraged by the start. But, we've got a long way to go."

Haslam expressed words of caution aimed at Shelby County municipalities expected to stampede toward voting on creating their own school systems. While "the train may have left the station" according to some suburban Mayors, Haslam would like to see it in an idling gear until the Transition Planning Committee has completed its job.

"We'd love to slow that train down. I honestly think the Transition Planning Committee has done great work. Now everybody might not agree with everything," the Governor said. "I'd love to be able to see them finish that task before we make some final decisions."

Words of caution would also seem to rule the day when, within earshot of University of Memphis President Shirley Raines, Haslam appeared to downplay the need for the school to have its own Board of Regents.

"One of the things we're trying to avoid is having all of our different four year schools and two year schools up lobbying the capital for money and other issues all the time. The system we have now holds that to a minimum. I think we're trying to find what's good for the University of Memphis and the city of Memphis by consequence."

[\(Back to top\)](#)

Illinois: Tech companies welcome plan to open six-year high school

Chicago Sun-Times

By: Sandra Guy

February 28, 2012

<http://www.suntimes.com/news/education/10942118-418/tech-companies-welcome-plan-to-open-six-year-high-schools.html>

Local tech companies welcomed the city's plan to create six-year high schools that would award students associate degrees in tech fields when they graduate.

SingleHop, a web hosting provider with data centers at 601 W. Polk and in Elk Grove Village, would hire grads for jobs such as datacenter technicians, system administrators, system developers and network engineers, company officials said.

"I love the idea of local talent coming from an organization with such strong founding partners," said Andy Pace, chief operating officer at SingleHop, which like other data centers houses web servers, network services and storage equipment for other companies. "We work in a very specific field of technology that requires not only a sound educational background but a willingness to learn as well."

Steve Wilneff, owner of TheGotSpot.com, a daily deals site in the northern and western suburbs, said of the plan: "It's a great concept."

Wilneff hires only independent contractors as his web staff, but he said he would "be open and interested in hiring people from

this program" for jobs such as programming, web design, code writing and web innovation. Those jobs typically pay \$50,000 a year to start. Hourly contractors who are prized for their programming skills make \$200 to \$250 an hour.

"It's very appealing if you get a person who is properly trained, who can come to work at the start, work with the systems you already have and grow with your company — as opposed to people whose skill sets require that the company modify its web or programming requirements," Wilneff said.

Ed Longanecker, executive director of regional tech advocate and nonprofit TechAmerica, agreed the new grads could be in demand.

"There are more jobs than talent to fill the opportunities in our state, and certainly the projected number of high skilled positions in the years to come," he said.

Chicago saw 124 digital startups launch last year — a 51 percent increase from 2010, according to data provided in January by Chicago venture and startup sources. TechNexus, Chicago's five-year-old tech collaborative and incubator space, announced in January that more than 130 companies have grown at its facility at 200 S. Wacker Drive, and those companies have gone on to create 400 jobs and to raise \$75 million in investment capital.

[\(Back to top\)](#)

First-Graders Read, Write, and Tweet in Illinois Classroom

Chicago Tribune

By: Michelle Manchir

February 29, 2012

http://www.edweek.org/dd/articles/2012/02/29/mct_tweeting.html

When Ed Knight wants to find out what his 6-year-old did in school, he can scroll the [Twitter feed](#) on his iPhone for clues to start a conversation with his quiet son, who sometimes holds back when recounting details of his day.

That's because Evan and others in first-grade teacher Jodi Conrad's class use Twitter to send out a weekly newsletter, update the days' activities and give parents reminders about upcoming programs.

Conrad's class at Abraham Lincoln Elementary School in Glen Ellyn is among a growing number that use social media and other technology to supplement lessons, even for very young students.

"These are tools that come standard in life right now," said Conrad, 36, who controls the account and the messages that the class, as a group, delivers. "I do it outside of class, so why not do it inside."

Her students also contribute to a classroom blog, make videos for a private [YouTube account](#) intended for parents, and write books using computer software.

Like many schools across the country, Glen Ellyn District 41 has equipped its school libraries with iPads, netbooks and laptops that can be checked out. It also has a lab outfitted with desktop computers, said Christina Kellam, technology specialist at District 41.

Conrad and other teachers who use kid-friendly blogging programs and social media are finding the tools are becoming integral parts of their classrooms.

Conrad's class tweeting sessions, which usually come at the end of the day for about 20 minutes, keep communication open with parents and help the kids learn typing, spelling and reading, Conrad said. Getting to push the "tweet" button is also an exciting privilege.

"It's kind of our class meeting at the end of the day," Conrad said. "This is really great for reflection."

Educators are realizing more and more that modern technology has a place in classrooms, especially since kids are motivated to use the tools, said David Vinca, founder of eSpark, a Chicago-based group that aims to personalize programs for iPad-equipped classrooms.

"Kids actually want to use the technologies, and if we make them education tools, we have kind of a win-win," Vinca said.

Churchill Elementary first-grade teacher Whitney Crouch said her Glen Ellyn students use secure blogging software made especially for classrooms. She said they use it to share ideas or stories, and she sees some who may not be confident writers with paper and pencil soar in front of a laptop.

Crouch, 31, said students like knowing they have an audience for their missives and being able to reach out to their loved ones who may live in other states.

"They see it as something that adults do," Crouch said. "It really builds their confidence."

Starting student training on social media in a safe environment with the guidance of a teacher at a young age also is a valuable tool.

These young students are "going to have an entire life that exists on the Internet in the virtual world," Kellam said. "They need to understand the difference between the different social media tools. Starting in first grade—I don't see any negative."

For parents, it's a good opportunity to teach young children that technology isn't for entertainment only, Knight said.

"It's not just about computers are good for playing games on," Knight said.

[\(Back to top\)](#)