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Feature

Residency Programs for Teachers: Trailblazers in the Trenches

Ms. Silva is a highly effective and experienced middle-grades teacher whose students this year include one who is working towards a master's degree. That older student is Ms. Harris, who plans to be a teacher herself in the near future. The students in Ms. Silva's classroom treat Ms. Harris with respect as she practices differentiated instruction under the watchful eye of Ms. Silva. While Ms. Harris has studied math for years, she's now putting her knowledge to work in a high-need school alongside Ms. Silva, learning best practices in the process. Behind Ms. Silva, supporting her role as mentor to Ms. Harris, is a network that includes a university working in partnership with the local school district and school leaders. Ms. Harris is one of a growing number of teacher residents.

While this account is fictional, it represents a real-life innovation in teacher preparation that is gaining momentum in urban and other school districts. The concept is borrowed from another professional field – medicine. If classroom learning combined with real-life experience is effective for the development of a new physician, why shouldn't the concept of graduate-level education and extended classroom practice make for better-prepared teachers? It's an important question that teacher residency programs are addressing.

Early Trailblazers Cultivated Teacher Resident Core Components

Many critics of traditional teacher preparation programs argue that coursework alone is not enough for an aspiring teacher to fully understand and have the required skill sets needed to teach effectively, especially when most traditional preparation programs do not introduce the aspiring teacher into the classroom until the end of the coursework and then only for a short time. With increased accountability for all students to achieve at high levels and to ensure that all students are learning, schools cannot afford to play catch-up by supplementing the preparation of new teachers once they become the instructional leaders responsible for the academic achievement of a class. This is particularly true of urban school districts, some of which began searching for a different path to deliver new teachers to their classrooms more confident and prepared for their professional responsibilities at the

outset of their careers.

The [Boston Teacher Residency](#), the [Boettcher Teacher Program](#) in Denver, and the [Academy for Urban School Leadership](#) (AUSL) in Chicago are trailblazers for teacher residency programs. Initially serving these and other urban districts, [teacher residency programs](#) provide teacher candidates – residents – with effective learning theory and yearlong apprenticeships under the tutelage of highly effective teachers who serve as role models and mentors. Prior to entering a classroom, residents have [intensive summer preparation](#) for classroom experience and are matched with their [effective](#) teacher mentors.

Just as is the case in the medical field, teaching residents engage in authentic practice with the support of master/mentor teachers, gaining the requisite skills needed to be effective teachers of record. While participating in in-school training over the course of one academic year, the resident gradually takes responsibility for fully engaging students in learning. From day one, however, the resident is an integral partner of her mentor, participating in curriculum planning and instructional delivery.

Teaching residents are professionals who are earning a living wage while taking additional master's level coursework in education. Residencies are built around the concept of authentic practice that strives to

seamlessly combine theory and pedagogy and that delivers a quid-pro-quo for the resident and mentor: They launch the careers of the new teachers of record while providing veteran teachers the opportunity to remain in the classroom to teach but take on the added professional dimension of mentoring and developing leadership skills.

The Residency model places student learning and professional learning at the core of the preparation model. The supply and retention of well-prepared, effective teachers in high-need schools has been a concern for school districts and higher education for several years. According to the [Alliance for Excellent Education](#), teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate: “14 percent of new teachers leave by the end of their first year; 33 percent leave within three years; and almost 50 percent leave in five years. Estimated conservatively, American schools spend more than \$2.6 billion annually replacing teachers who have dropped out of the profession.”

High attrition rates are not reflective of the level of commitment or the willingness to teach on the part of new teachers, but are [indicative of the adequacy](#) of preparation a new teacher has received, according to Urban Teacher Residency United. Institutions of higher education have remodeled their teacher preparation curricula over the years to include additional coursework, alternative routes to certification, and some have implemented professional development school models in partnerships with K-12 schools in efforts to address the needs of new teachers. Yet a learning gap has persisted, particularly in high-need schools.

For urban districts that trail blazed the teacher residency approach, the effort appears to be paying off in terms of their retention rates. For example, three-year retention rates for the combined 629 teachers who were prepared as residents in Denver, Boston, and Chicago are 98 percent, 86 percent, and 85 percent, respectively.

Institutionalization and Increased Support through Reauthorization

The early adopters of the urban residency programs in Chicago and Boston were supported in their efforts principally by two key members of the private sector – Martin J. Koldyke, a venture capitalist and founder of The Golden Apple Foundation in Chicago and the Boston Plan for Excellence in Boston. In Denver, the Boettcher Foundation invested in the concept as of 2003, creating the [Boettcher Teachers Program](#). The National Science Foundation and the Public Education Foundation also contributed to the emerging innovation and some success was fostered in Tennessee’s Hamilton County. Known as the [Benwood Initiative](#), new teacher residents were placed in cohorts in some of the hardest-to-staff schools and paired with effective teachers; the results have been impressive in terms of students’ [achievement gains](#).

In 2008, the reauthorized [Higher Education Opportunity Act](#) (Public Law 110-315) specifically defined residency programs, and the 2009 appropriation for the [Teacher Quality Partnership](#) (TQP) program began the federal investment in establishing and expanding teacher residency programs. The statutory language of the Teacher Residency programs incorporates the seven principles of the Boston Teacher Residency and the AUSL that were identified by the Aspen Institute as being integral to distinguishing these two residencies as trailblazers. [Urban Teacher Residency United](#) has refined these principles and is developing a program called Residency for Residencies.

The Office of Innovation and Improvement in the U.S. Department of Education arranged two competitions and awarded funding to create or enhance Teacher Residency projects. Since 2009, the TQP program has invested \$186 million to reform teacher preparation, \$100 million of which came from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The newly funded program places a heavier emphasis on “authentic student-teaching and requires colleges of education to work with local districts to address their specific teaching needs.” Of the 40 funded grants thus far, 28 include Residency components.

Boston and Chicago’s Residency programs were awarded new funding under the TQP competition and both are scaling up in response to their districts’ needs. In these grants, districts identify specific schools that would benefit from

“These [Teacher Quality Partnership Program] grants will strengthen teacher preparation and residency programs to ensure that new teachers ... have the skills to boost student learning and be highly effective in today’s diverse and challenging classrooms.”

— Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

the model. The TQP grants allow projects to authorize a living wage to the residents while requiring the districts to provide two years of induction following the residency year. The partnerships use their federal funds to leverage matching funds from local, state, and foundation funding sources.

Highly Relevant Teacher Preparation

A key to residency programs is the ability of nascent teachers to internalize how to apply curriculum theory and practice and to reflect on their classroom experience in a learning community that extends from the university campus for coursework to the inner-city classroom with its real-world challenges. To accomplish this, partnering school districts and institutions of higher education employ a [reformed curriculum](#) that better prepares new teachers to work with diverse, high-need student populations and also allows them to incorporate research-based practice in the context of the high-need schools. In New York, for example Teachers College Columbia University [TR@TC](#) Residents participate in educational rounds to “engage principals and teachers in learning communities” and incorporate instructional digital tools. Residents take graduate coursework one day a week while apprenticing with highly effective teachers in a classroom for four days each week. Common planning time and two years of induction are supported in numerous studies on teacher effectiveness.

Recent support from the Department’s Teacher Quality Partnership program is helping existing Teacher Residency programs to grow their ranks of successful Residents. In Chicago, AUSL placed 84 residents in selected high-need schools this fall, compared with 55 residents in prior years and a total of 368 since 2001. The nonprofit and its partnering institution, [National Louis University](#), plan to recruit and support an additional 360 residents over five years and are exploring ways to sustain the model in the Chicago Public Schools. The grant also allows AUSL to develop school leadership pathways and career ladders for teachers. The training design permits residents to develop teaching fundamentals as well as the “strength, resiliency, and flexibility necessary to be successful urban school teachers.” AUSL uses a turnaround school model and incorporates seven components from their [turnaround framework](#) to improve student achievement in some of Chicago’s highest-need schools.

Districts in the Driver’s Seat of Reform

The Residency programs supported by the TQP grant program have a common objective of striving to meet the needs of the districts they serve for the highest quality teachers in the most challenging classrooms. AUSL and the Boston Teacher Residency, in partnership with the University of Massachusetts – Boston and Wheelock College, expect to increase the number of residents to meet the needs of the districts they serve. In Boston, the residency program plans to prepare one third of the teachers needed for Boston Public Schools’ annual hiring, and in Chicago, AUSL has a goal of preparing up to 90 residents each year to meet the needs of the district.

Building on the trailblazing urban efforts of Boston, Denver, and Chicago, there are now rural residency programs in [California](#) and [Louisiana](#), thanks to funding from the TQP program. A common standard for all Residencies, urban and rural, is allowing individuals who are starting their careers or transitioning from other fields with content knowledge to become certified while benefitting from authentic pedagogical practice. The Boston Teacher Residency embraces the multiple routes to its program with the phrase, “From Willing to Able.”

[Bard College](#) received federal funding in 2009 to develop a residency for rural Central Valley California and has aspirations of placing 130 residents. Twenty-one residents and highly effective mentor teachers have been recruited to the project in the past year. In the first year, Bard College built capacity to prepare and place residents in high-need schools while providing professional development to potential mentor teachers working in rural schools. [Paramount Bard Academy](#) serves as an initial placement for Bard College Residents. The charter school “prepares all students for the challenges of college and for success in their chosen careers. At the same time, the Academy provides a model for educating future teachers and providing professional development for local educators in a model school environment.” In both the rural and urban programs, residents commit to teach in high-need schools for a minimum of three years as required by the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act. Chicago’s Academy of Urban School Leadership requires a four-year teaching commitment.

Meeting Challenges and Validating Effectiveness

Teacher Residencies are not without their challenges. Some districts consider the cost of paying a living-wage to new residents and the supportive services they receive an impediment to implementing residency programs. Additionally, given the current economic climate, Residents cannot always be guaranteed employment upon completion of their Residencies in the districts for which they prepared.

Selection of highly effective mentor teachers is also a challenge for districts. Many of the existing Residencies provide specialized professional development for the mentor teachers as well as additional funding to support the extra time required to mentor Residents. Such professional development efforts are needed in order to help mentors with aspects of the Residency model such as the mentors' gradual release of responsibility for classroom curriculum and management.

Like other nascent innovations, Residency programs lack sufficient long-term data to provide strong evidence of their impact on student achievement and teacher retention. However, the 695 residents from Boston, Chicago, and Denver who are now teachers signal the beginning of larger cohorts of teachers prepared through Residencies for which data can be gathered and analyzed. In addition, the U. S. Department of Education has commissioned an implementation [study](#) of the Residency model. This critical evaluation will study the impact of Residency-prepared teachers on student achievement. Reports are expected to be available in 2013 and 2014. The 2013 report will include descriptive information regarding the programs and one year of student achievement and teacher retention results. The 2014 report will update the student achievement and retention findings with a second year of data.

The challenges associated with ensuring that new teachers are fully prepared for success in the classroom has taken on an increased urgency in recent years, particularly for high-need schools and districts. The residency concept borrowed from the medical profession, one for which there is public confidence for producing well-prepared doctors, appears to be a promising prescription to reach the national goal of having an excellent teacher in every classroom.

Key Resources

- [“Creating and Sustaining Urban Teacher Residencies: A New Way to Recruit, Prepare, and Retain Effective Teachers in High-Need Districts,”](#) available from the Aspen Institute and the Center for Teaching Quality
- [The Teacher Quality Partnership Grant Program](#)
- [“Boston Reinvents Teacher Training,”](#) from *Administrator Magazine*, March/April 2009
- [Mathematica study](#) on the Teacher Residency Program

Special Report: “Courage in the Classroom” Tour



First stop on the “Courage in the Classroom” bus tour: historic Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.

The Willie Nelson classic “On the Road Again” may have been on the mind of Secretary of Education Arne Duncan as his “Courage in the Classroom: Honoring America’s Teachers” [bus tour](#) spanned eight states, 14 cities, and more than 800 miles last month. Along the way, he heard from teachers and other educators about the vital work they are doing to educate America’s young people and talked with students, parents, and community leaders about their goals for the new school year and beyond. The Secretary recounts many of the tour stops in a [travelogue](#), but here are a few tour highlights, some in his own words and thoughts:

- Before departing on the tour, the Secretary joined more than 100 students and their parents, grandparents, and younger siblings for a stroll—a [walking school bus](#)—from a park to an elementary school in a neighborhood of Washington, D.C.
- Then, on the eve of his tour, the Secretary delivered [remarks](#) at the Little Rock Convention Center in

Arkansas. "As I said in a speech a few weeks ago, no one thinks [student] test scores should be the only factor in teacher evaluations, and no one wants to evaluate teachers based on a single test on a single day," he stated. "But looking at student progress over time, in combination with other factors like peer review and principal observation, can lead to a culture shift in our schools where we finally take good teaching as seriously as the profession deserves." He was responding to a recent report by the Los Angeles Times that used students' performance on standardized tests to determine which teachers get the greatest gains out of their students.

- In [Jackson, Miss.](#), he visited the Kids Kollege Children's Defense Fund Freedom School at Jackson State University where a conversation with teacher interns focused on ways to recruit a new generation of effective teachers.
- Two days in the South were followed by a Northeast tour that took the Secretary to Albany, New York, followed by stops in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, including one in [Portsmouth](#) where the Secretary talked with "families at the Naval Shipyard about the difficulties they face in providing their children with a consistently top-notch education as they move around the country and the world in our nation's service."
- In a final stop in [Maine](#), three rising 8th graders shared their thoughts with the Secretary about the impact of the civil rights movement in their lives.



Secretary Duncan visited classrooms where children of military families attend and spoke with parents, family members, and teachers about the challenges they face in achieving a high-quality education.

Looking back on the tour, Secretary Duncan was "encouraged by the teachers who are working hard to make a difference in the lives of students, often in difficult circumstances." Their tireless work gives the Secretary confidence that "our nation will be able to achieve the President's 2020 goal of having the highest college graduation rate in the world."

What's New ?

From the U.S. Department of Education

On September 14, President Obama delivered his second annual Back to School [speech](#) at Julia R. Masterman Laboratory and Demonstration School – a 2010 National Blue Ribbon School – in Philadelphia. Like last year, this was an opportunity for the President to speak directly to students. The speech was broadcast live (on CNN and online) and shown in schools across the country. "Nobody gets to write your destiny but you. Your future is in your hands," the President told the students. "Your life is what you make of it. And nothing – absolutely nothing – is beyond your reach, so long as you're willing to dream big, so long as you're willing to work hard. So long as you're willing to stay focused on your education, there is not a single thing that any of you cannot accomplish." (September 2010)



National Blue Ribbon Schools at the School without Walls in Washington, D.C.

Secretary Duncan [named](#) 304 schools as "2010 National Blue Ribbon Schools," which are both high-performing schools in which the students, regardless of background, perform in the top 10 percent on their state assessments (public schools) or nationally normed assessments (private schools) and schools in which students, at least 40 percent of whom are from disadvantaged backgrounds,

dramatically improved on tests to score in at least the top 40 percent statewide. Chief State School Officers nominate the public schools. The Council for American Private Education nominates the private schools. All schools will be honored at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., November 15-16. (September 2010)

Secretary Duncan [addressed](#) an international education symposium entitled "Building Blocks for Education: Whole School Reform," sponsored by the Ontario Ministry of Education, which convened education policymakers and experts from six nations to share ideas and look at new ways to solve issues. "Systemic change ... takes time," he said. "Yet, I am convinced that the U.S. education system now has an unprecedented opportunity to get dramatically better and that nothing is more important in the long-run to

American prosperity than boosting the skills and attainment of the nation's students." (September 2010)

The Department [awarded](#) two groups of states substantial grants to develop a new generation of tests that will be aligned to the higher standards that were devised by the nation's governors and chief state school officers. "As I travel around the country, the number one complaint I hear from teachers is that bubble tests pressure teachers to teach to a test that doesn't measure what really matters," Secretary Duncan stated. The grantees are the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), a coalition of 26 states, and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), a coalition of 31 states. PARCC will test students' ability to read complex text, complete research projects, excel at classroom speaking and listening assignments, and work with digital media. SBAC will test students using computer adaptive technology that will ask students tailored questions based on previous answers. The grant requests, totaling approximately \$330 million, are part of the [Race to the Top competition](#). (September 2010)

From the Office of Innovation and Improvement

All 49 highest-rated [Investing in Innovation](#) (i3) applicants [secured](#) their required private-sector matches, clearing the way for these applicants to receive grants in the three categories of the i3 Fund: Development (up to \$5 million); Validation (up to \$30 million); and Scale-up (up to \$50 million). The Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII), which conducted the i3 application review process, has released the list of [peer reviewers](#). (September 2010)

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan [announced](#) that 21 nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education will receive Promise Neighborhoods planning grants. With the one-year grants, the recipients will create plans to provide cradle-to-career services that improve the educational achievement and healthy development of children. "Communities across the country recognize that education is the one true path out of poverty," Secretary Duncan said. "These Promise Neighborhoods applicants are committed to putting schools at the center of their work to provide comprehensive services for young children and students." The [planning grants](#) of up to \$500,000 will support the work in a diverse set of communities in major metropolitan areas, small and medium-size cities, rural areas, and one Indian reservation. (September 2010)

OII and the National Education Association (NEA) Foundation launched a new challenge for teachers to identify and solve education's most pressing classroom problems. "[Challenge to Innovate](#)" (C2i) enlists teachers to think creatively and implement innovative classroom ideas. C2i also recognizes the urgency for improvement and is providing a new model that moves rapidly from idea conception to implementation and evaluation, while simultaneously supplying critical support to educators. Under the partnership, the Department's [Open Innovation Portal](#) will host the three-phase C2i. In Phase 1, through October 19, teachers are asked to share their most pressing classroom challenges that can be solved with \$500 or less. The five ideas receiving the most votes – as judged by the Open Innovation Portal community – will each receive \$1,000 from the NEA Foundation. In Phase 2, from November 16 through January 14, teachers will post the best solutions to the winning challenges. Up to 10 solutions will receive a \$2,500 implementation grant from the NEA Foundation. In Phase 3, from January 17 through February 4, the NEA Foundation will select up to three solutions to receive a \$5,000 planning grant and technical support. These solutions will be posted on the [Donors Choose](#) website, where teachers will be invited to submit requests to receive up to \$500 in implementation costs. The NEA Foundation, partnering with citizen philanthropists, will provide funding for teachers to implement and test these innovation solutions. (September 2010)

From the Institute of Education Sciences

A [First Look report](#) from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), within the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), presents findings from three different postsecondary education data collections: institutional characteristics for the 2009-10 academic year; student completions from July 1, 2008, through June 30, 2009; and student enrollment for the 2008-09 academic year. (August 2010)

According to NCES' new "[Back to School Statistics for 2010](#)," America's schools and colleges will welcome back large numbers of students this fall, as population increases and high enrollment rates continue to be reflected in more students in America's schools than ever. (August 2010)

Arts Education

On October 2, [ARTSEEDGE](#), the Kennedy Center's online teacher and student website, is being re-launched. The new and improved site features easier site navigation and display, as well as brand-new sections geared toward students and families. Developed with initial support from the National Endowment for the Arts, the United States Department of Education, and the Kennedy Center, ARTSEEDGE provides lesson plans, multi-media enhanced instruction, and performance footage. The revamped site boasts color-coded sections for educators, parents, and students. Educators using the site can display high-definition clips from the site directly on whiteboards in their classrooms. Teachers may also embed resources from the site directly on their own classroom blogs or websites and can log in and personalize their settings, saving articles for later. (September 2010)

As one of a dozen Districts of Creativity, Creative Oklahoma will host a global event to explore how creativity drives commerce, culture, and education. The 2010 [Creativity World Forum](#) will be held in Oklahoma City on November 15-17, and will feature more than 65 speakers and presenters including some of the world's most respected thinkers on creativity. The State of Oklahoma and the Chickasaw Nation are presenting sponsors of the two-day 2010 Creativity World Forum, the first ever hosted in North America. (September 2010)

Massachusetts enacted the [Creative Challenge Index](#) legislation, which will evaluate schools on the opportunities they give students for developing creativity and innovation through the arts or any appropriate subject in addition to using standardized tests in ELA, math, and science. In the coming year, a commission of legislators, educators, business leaders, and community leaders will establish an index to measure the extent to which schools provide opportunities for students to engage in creative work. The index will examine and rate every public school in the Commonwealth on the teaching, encouraging, and fostering of creativity in students through arts education, debate clubs, science fairs, theater performances, concerts, film-making, and independent research. (September 2010)

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts announced the [recipients](#) of its national awards program honoring outstanding school arts programs. Five schools were chosen as *John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts National Schools of Distinction in Arts Education* for their work during the 2009-2010 school year. The award recognizes schools that have made the arts an essential part of their students' education. Each school will receive a \$2,000 award to support their arts education program. (August 2010)

Charter Schools

The [National Charter School Resource Center](#), funded by the Office of Innovation and Improvement and administered by Learning Point Associates, offers news, insights, and resources to support the development of high-quality charter schools. Priority areas are support for state agencies, facilities, authorization, leadership, and school turnaround. The Center's [e-newsletter](#) is provided without charge. (September 2010)

Teacher turnover in charter schools is more likely driven by the same factors that lead teachers to leave traditional public schools than a so-called "charter effect," according to a [report](#) from the Center on Reinventing Public Education. "Parallel Patterns: Teacher Attrition in Charter vs. District Schools" tracked the careers of nearly 1,000 newly hired charter school teachers and 20,000 traditional public school teachers in Wisconsin between 1998 and 2006. The report's authors found that high teacher turnover rates were primarily a function of young and inexperienced teachers and poor and urban school settings, not the nature of charter schools. Teachers in both charter and traditional public schools cited a lack of administrative support, poor working conditions, and low salaries as reasons for leaving. (September 2010)

The National Association of Charter School Authorizers has released a first [issue brief](#) in a series that is intended to help authorizers understand key elements involved in successful charter school replication. "Charter School Replication Guide: The Spectrum of Replication Options" defines the scope of replication,

which the report calls “a package deal that includes all of the elements necessary to allow a freestanding charter school to reproduce its core features in a distinctly separate context.” The brief also defines different strategies for replication, including multiple schools and campuses, franchises, conversions and turnarounds, and cyber schools, and provides links to other resources. (August 2010)

College Readiness and Completion

More college-bound students in the class of 2010 took the SAT® than in any other high school graduating class in history, according to a [new report](#) from the College Board. Nearly 1.6 million students from this year's graduating class participated in the college-going process by taking the SAT, and their overall performance underscored the critical role that course-taking patterns and academic rigor play in college readiness. "Engaging students with more rigorous course work and demanding higher standards are critical in providing America's students with an education that will prepare them to compete in the 21st-century economy," said College Board President Gaston Caperton. "This report confirms that there are no tricks and there are no shortcuts to college readiness. Students who take more rigorous courses in high school are more prepared to succeed in college and beyond." (September 2010)

Dr. Jill Biden will convene the first-ever [White House Summit on Community Colleges](#) on October 5. Community colleges are the largest and fastest growing segment of America's higher education system, enrolling more than eight million students annually. The Administration has made historic investments in new innovations and reforms to expand and strengthen opportunities at community colleges. The White House is offering a range of ways for the public to submit their thoughts, questions, and challenges for discussion as part of the summit dialogue. (September 2010)

Financial Literacy

According to a [survey](#) released by the National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE), while 89 percent of teachers agree that their students should take a financial literacy course or pass a test for graduation, less than a third were actually teaching it, and less than 20 percent of teachers said they feel competent to teach financial literacy. In response, the Departments of Education and the Treasury have teamed up to continue administering the [National Financial Capability Challenge](#). Teachers who sign up for the challenge receive a teachers' toolkit and other free materials to prepare their students for a voluntary, online exam students can take between March 7 and April 8, 2011. (September 2010)

School Improvement

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) "[Education at a Glance 2010](#)" compares education in OECD's 33 member countries using a range of indicators. The primary topics covered are participation and achievement, public and private spending, conditions for students and teachers, and the state of lifelong learning. The OECD report affirms that the United States is "headed in the right direction to meet President Obama's goal of regaining the lead in college completion by the end of the decade," according to a [statement](#) from Education Secretary Arne Duncan. "The United States moved from 12th in the world in 2007 in the percentage of young adults with a college degree to tie for ninth in the world in 2008. But we have a lot more work to do to get there." (September 2010)

Teacher Quality and Development

According to a [study](#) released by e-Learning for Educators, teachers who took professional development courses online improved their teaching practices and subject knowledge, and produced learning gains for their students. The 10-state consortium that comprises e-Learning for Educators is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Ready to Teach program and led by Alabama Public Television. The study, which included 330 teachers and 7,000 students, is the largest set of independent randomized trials conducted on an online professional development program to date. (September 2010)

A new [brochure](#) written by teachers and for teachers, "Built for Teachers: How the Blueprint for Reform Empowers Teachers," spotlights issues in the Obama Administration's plans to revise and reauthorize the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), focusing on those of particular concern for educators. (September 2010)

Innovations in the News

Standards and Assessments

In Rhode Island schools, the class of 2012 will have new graduation requirements, and districts are implementing changes to meet the tougher standards. Seniors will have end-of-course exams to pass, but also a senior project to complete that includes a research paper. Efforts in Providence are underway to start as early as middle school to provide students with what they'll need to be prepared for college. Student advisories will be offered four times a week and each middle school student will have an individual learning plan. Local administrators in Providence are scheduling a series of town meetings to explain the new requirements to parents. [More—[The Providence Journal \(R.I.\)](#)] (Sept. 13)

Academically motivated eighth-graders in Colorado who find themselves on the waiting lists of high-performing high schools now have an alternative, thanks to Tony Caine, a high-tech businessman who created Summit 54. "There are too many bright urban students left to languish" among the more than 400,000 students nationally on wait lists to get into charter schools, according to Caine. His new foundation will use data to select the most academically motivated eighth-graders. He intends to offer about 100 of them from Denver, the Western Slope in Colorado, and Chicago a contract: They will be provided with a high-level education that augments the offerings in their traditional public schools by way of "tutoring, ... lessons in public speaking and interpersonal skills, trips to cultural sites, tours of university campuses and help applying to college." [More—[The Denver Post](#)] (Sept. 9)

A new report from the National Council of La Raza and the Center for American Progress calls on charter schools to do a better job serving English-language learners (ELLs) and offers several examples of charters that are succeeding with ELLs. "Next Generation Charter Schools" also calls on states to revisit existing charter laws to ensure that charters have access to federal and state categorical funds for English-language-acquisition programs. The report was received favorably by such charter-sector organizations as the National Association of Charter School Authorizers. More—[Education Week](#)] (Sept. 1) (*premium article access compliments of EdWeek.org*)

Education Data Systems

The Houston Independent School District (HISD) is using its sophisticated data system to inform and help implement its strategies to improve graduation rates. With data in hand identifying the district's high school students who did not attend classes the first week of the new school year, hundreds of volunteers, including Houston Superintendent Terry Grier, knocked on their doors on Saturday morning. Now in its seventh year, Grads Within Reach, arms the volunteers with information on which credits a student needs to graduate as well as the options for gaining the credits. Following last year's reach-out effort, 400 students graduated in May who otherwise would not have. [More—[The Christian Science Monitor](#)] (Sept. 11)

Teachers and Leaders

The California State Board of Education approved the creation of an online database to share information from the local, state, and national levels on measures of teachers' effectiveness. The board also requested that three local districts – Los Angeles Unified (LAUSD), Long Beach, and Fresno – propose ways for the state level to support improved teacher evaluation tools, including value-added methods. In his testimony to the board concerning how the Los Angeles district will evaluate teachers, LAUSD Assistant Superintendent John Deasy said multiple measures are planned, including classroom observations by trained evaluators as well as value-added analysis and input from parents and students. [More—The [Los Angeles Times](#)] (Sept. 16)

A majority of Americans support merit pay for teachers, according to a recent survey by Phi Delta Kappa and Gallup. The poll, conducted of more than 1,000 Americans, most of whom were over the age of 40, also evidenced strong interest in improving teacher quality – nearly half of the respondents ranked "improving the quality of our teachers" ahead of other options such as "developing demanding education standards," "creating better tests," and "improving the nation's lowest-performing schools." Concerning merit pay, there was no majority opinion as to how teacher performance should be evaluated and measured. Sixty percent,

however, indicated that helping teachers improve their craft should be the primary reason for the evaluations. [More—[Teacher Magazine](#)] (Sept. 14) (*premium article access compliments of EdWeek.org*)

The Hawaii Department of Education, as part of its Race to the Top grant award, has launched a multipronged strategy to recruit and retain teachers in order to tackle its more than 50 percent attrition rate for teachers who leave within five years of being hired. The plan components include bonuses of \$3,000 or more for teachers who stay in assignments in hard-to-staff schools and areas, increases in mentoring and professional development programs, and “steering young, inexperienced teachers to less challenging school environments.” The key to the plan overall, according to Robert Campbell, the department’s executive assistant for strategic reform, is making schools more supportive environments that offer opportunities for growth as well as to vent and get help from mentors. [More—[Honolulu Star-Advertiser](#)] (Sept. 7)

Schools without principals? That’s the concept behind teacher-led public schools, an innovation that is increasingly evident in locations such as Boston, Denver, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis. The implementation is different from one to the next, but all have shared decisionmaking as the common defining characteristic. The experimentation with teacher-led schools signals “a period where people are trying to introduce variation into the system,” according to Charles Kercher, an education professor at Claremont Graduate University in California. In most cases, data on student achievement is at too early a stage to judge effectiveness. In Milwaukee, however, a dozen schools run by teacher cooperatives are reporting higher standardized test scores than the district’s average. [More—[The Christian Science Monitor](#)] (Sept. 1)

In Louisiana, the Jefferson Parish Schools are stepping out front to take on efforts to adopt a protocol for evaluating teachers based on how their students perform over time. The state is funding the effort as a model for other Louisiana districts and chose Jefferson Parish because of both its size and diversity of schools. The plan is to use a combination of teacher reviews and tracking of students’ performance on standardized tests over time; results will impact promotions of teachers and principals as well as inform decisions to confer tenure and dismiss teachers. The new evaluation system is expected to be implemented statewide in 2013-14. [More—[The Times-Picayune \(New Orleans\)](#)] (Sept. 1)

Interventions in Low-Performing Schools

Johns Hopkins University’s Talent Development, Communities in Schools, and City Year are partnering with the Detroit Public Schools to bring Diplomas Now, a national dropout prevention program, to two Motor City K-8 schools. Only 58 percent of Detroit’s students are graduating from high school, a figure the city wants to change to 98 percent by 2015. Researchers at John Hopkins know that children at risk for dropping out can be identified as early as sixth grade, and that fact drives the Diplomas Now initiative. Other cities implementing it, with the help of a \$30 million federal education grant, are New Orleans, Philadelphia, Chicago, San Antonio, and Los Angeles. [More—[The Detroit News](#)] (Sept. 16)

Suspensions in middle school – and the disparities in the rates of them among racial and ethnic groups – are the subject of a new study and report from the Southern Poverty Law Center. According to the report, “Suspended Education: Urban Middle Schools in Crisis,” black boys were nearly three times as likely to be suspended as white boys. Using 40 years of federal education data on suspensions, researchers looked most closely at the period from 2002 to 2006. Among the long-term findings: “Throughout America’s public schools, in kindergarten through high school, the percent of students suspended each year nearly doubled from the early 1970s through 2006.” [More—[The New York Times](#)] (Sept. 13) (free registration)

The Charles Drew Charter School in Atlanta may have some advice for its K-8 counterparts in Detroit. When students graduate from Drew, they don’t become strangers, but rather alumni who are welcomed back to use the computer lab, get help with homework, or even participate in college tours and receive advice about financial aid and college scholarships. It’s all part of the charter school’s “cradle to college pipeline,” which is fueled by a basic belief that, in the words of Drew Charter School’s principal Don Doran, “poverty is not an excuse here.” The Drew concept is being used in at least seven other cities in the Southeast. [More—[The Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#)] (Sept. 11) (free registration)

Summer-bridge programs, which are designed to bolster the skills and confidence of rising ninth-graders who may be at risk of dropping out, are gaining in popularity nationally. In Seattle, a five and one-half week program sponsored by the city and run by the YMCA takes an especially intensive approach. Students are admitted by invitation following recommendations from middle-school teachers and principals based on grades and school attendance, among other criteria. The nearly 100 bridge students take math and language-arts classes four mornings a week, followed by afternoon enrichment classes that range from music to martial arts to robotics. [More—[The Seattle Times/The Hechinger Report](#)] (Sept. 8)

Make every minute count! That’s the philosophy and practice at Propel McKeesport, one of a small group of charter schools in Western Pennsylvania. There are no intercom announcements during class time. If a student feels sick, the school nurse does the initial assessment in the class, and changes from class to class are practiced to meet the standard of two minutes or less. Use of time is also one of the six habits that the Propel schools emphasize for students – “get here, work hard and manage your time.” At McIntyre Elementary School in another Western Pennsylvania community, students begin work as soon as they enter the classroom. For those who arrive as early as 8:40 a.m. for the 9:00 a.m. start time, it means an extra 60 hours a year of learning. [More—[Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)] (Sept. 5)

Remedial help is the top concern for school administrators in New Jersey who recently uncovered evidence of seniors who failed their exit exams because they were incapable of mastering Algebra I and English I, but who were passed along without needed tutoring and other interventions. The state education agency is putting new steps in place, including immediate remedial help for students who fail eighth-grade state tests. In addition, “districts will be required to keep a complete record of progress for each of these at-risk students,” according to the state’s Assistant Education Commissioner Willa Spicer. [More—[The Record \(Hackensack, N.J.\)](#)] (Sept. 2)

Purpose

The purpose of the U.S. Department of Education’s online newsletter *The Education Innovator* is to promote innovative practices in education; to offer features on promising programs and practices; to provide information on innovative research, schools, policies, and trends; and to keep readers informed of key Department priorities and activities. The Department’s Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII) is responsible for the newsletter’s research, writing, and production.

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