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Subject: RE: ED Review (03/23/12)

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Subject: [ED_REVIEW] ED Review (03/23/12)

ED REVIEW

March 23, 2012

...a bi-weekly update on U.S. Department of Education activities relevant to the Intergovernmental and Corporate community and other stakeholders

GRAD NATION

According to a report released at the second annual "Building a Grad Nation" Summit, sponsored by America's Promise Alliance, the nation continues to make progress at increasing graduation rates and decreasing the number of "dropout factories." The national high school graduation rate increased, from 72% in 2001 to 75.5% in 2009. Twenty states made significant gains (+3 to +17 percentage points), with New York (+13) and Tennessee (+17.8) recording double-digit gains. Yet, only one state, Wisconsin, had a graduation rate of 90%, and 10 states actually saw declines in their graduation rates during this period. Meanwhile, the number of so-called dropout factories -- high schools graduating 60% or fewer students on time -- decreased, from 2,007 in 2002 to 1,550 in 2010, with the rate of decline accelerating since 2008. Three states, Florida (-62), Georgia (-54), and Texas (-122), decreased the number of dropout factories by over 50. Further, the South (-410) and suburbs (-171) recorded the largest declines in the number of dropout factories. However, the Midwest (+33) and towns (+42) and rural areas (+33) recorded increases. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.americaspromise.org/our-work/grad-nation/building-a-grad-nation.aspx>.

In remarks opening a panel discussion on the same subject at the summit, Secretary Duncan provided a preliminary progress report on the Department's School Improvement Grants (SIG) program. Through SIG, which seeks to accelerate student achievement in the nation's lowest-performing 5% of schools via far-reaching interventions, the agency has invested more than \$4 billion, reaching over 1,200 schools. In the first year under SIG:

- nearly one in four schools saw double-digit increases in math proficiency;
- roughly one in five schools saw double-digit increases in reading proficiency; and
- in about 60% of SIG schools, the percentage of students proficient in math or reading went up during the first year.

"At the heart of all these successes are teachers and leaders who are excited about the prospect of change," the Secretary noted. "It's what motivates them, gets them up every morning, and keeps them working late into the

night.” FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/working-nations-lowest-performing-schools-progress-report>. (Note: Video of the session is available at <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/304968-1>.)

Seeking additional information on SIG? The program web site (<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/>) has a variety of resources, including a data map. Also, in a recent blog post (<http://www.ed.gov/blog/2012/03/ask-mr-mullenholz-about-school-improvement-grants/>), Teacher Ambassador Fellow Greg Mullenholz answers teachers’ questions about SIG.

INTERNATIONAL TEACHING SUMMIT

On March 14 and 15, education leaders from 23 high-performing and rapidly-improving countries and regions convened in New York City for the second International Summit on the Teaching Profession, sharing common challenges and best practices on training and supporting teachers and leaders. “We come to this work with real humility, coupled with a tremendous sense of urgency,” the Secretary said (<http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/world-class-teachers-and-school-leaders>). “The truth is the U.S. has a great deal to learn from countries that are out-educating us.” Before the summit, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) released a background paper (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/4/35/49850576.pdf>) providing an international overview of various methods and programs for recruiting, preparing, and developing teachers and leaders. In the coming weeks, the Asia Society will again lead host organizations in publishing a summary paper (last year’s report can be found at <http://asiasociety.org/files/lwtw-teachersummitreport0611.pdf>) to document insights shared and lessons learned. A third summit will be convened in Amsterdam next year. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/international/teaching-summit-2012.html>. (Note: Webcasts of the summit’s opening, framing, and closing sessions may be replayed from <http://media.rampard.com/cotl/20120314/doe/>.)

COMPLETING THE FAFSA

In 2010, the Department piloted a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Completion Project, to assist school districts and secondary school administrators in determining which of their students have completed a FAFSA for the upcoming school year. The pilot currently supplies principals, counselors, and college access professionals across 20 participating districts and high schools with actionable information to use in increasing FAFSA completion among their student population. Key studies have indicated that FAFSA completion correlates strongly with college enrollment, especially among low-income populations. Since the launch, the Department has received increasing requests to expand the project. An invitation for multiple high school districts to participate in the expansion effort was announced in January (<http://www.ed.gov/blog/2012/01/fafsa-completion-project-expands/>) and closed this month. Now, the Secretary is inviting additional single high school districts, including single high school rural districts, to participate in the project (<http://www.ed.gov/blog/2012/03/fafsa-completion-project-expands-targets-single-high-schools-leas-and-rural-districts/>). The Department will accept requests through May 1, 2012. Up to 12 districts will be chosen via random selection.

Also, school officials can now track FAFSA submission and completion statistics at individual schools on the Department’s FAFSA Completion web site. In the past, the agency did not have the means to provide real time, high school-specific data. Consequently, school officials had to rely on self-reported rates of FAFSA submission and completion, which were often higher than actual rates. Using the FAFSA Completion tool, which will be updated every two weeks, educators will have reliable data to track FAFSA submission and completion and gauge their progress in increasing FAFSA completion. School officials can determine their school-wide FAFSA completion rate by comparing the tool number with their number of high school seniors. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://federalstudentaid.ed.gov/datacenter/fafsahs.html>.

Moreover, on March 27 at 6:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, John White, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Rural Outreach, will host this month’s #AskFAFSA Office Hours on Twitter. FOR MORE INFORMATION,

PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2012/03/askfafs-a-hours-with-ruraleds-john-white/>.

COMMUNITY SERVICE HONOR

On March 12, the Department and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) honored leading colleges and universities, students, faculty members, and staff for their commitment to bettering their communities through community service and service learning. Five higher education institutions -- Carson-Newman College (TN), Miami University, North Carolina State University, Seattle University, and the University of Pennsylvania -- received the Presidential Award (the highest federal recognition) of the 2012 President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. CNCS, which has administered the Honor Roll since 2006, admitted 642 institutions for their impact on issues ranging from literacy and neighborhood revitalization to supporting at-risk youth. Of that total, 513 were named to the Honor Roll, 110 received the recognition of Honor Roll with Distinction, 14 were named as finalists, and five received the Presidential Award. According to the annual CNCS "Volunteering in America" report (<http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/>), 3.1 million college students dedicated over 312 million hours of service to local communities, service valued at more than \$6.6 billion. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.nationalservice.gov/honorroll>.

SUMMER JOBS FOR YOUTH

The Department has joined the White House's efforts to engage organizations nationwide to create new and promote existing summer jobs for low-income youth. These summertime opportunities yield experiences for the youth of America to learn life and work skills, laying the groundwork for pathways to educational and professional success. Back in January, the President set an ambitious goal of having 250,000 jobs in the Summer Jobs+ Bank by March 16 and growing that number through the end of May. Businesses, non-profits, and governments can accept the President's call and make a "Pathways Pledge" in one of three categories: Life Skills (resume writing or interview workshops and mentorship programs); Work Skills (job shadow days and internships); and Learn and Earn (paid positions). Organizations are also encouraged to enter existing opportunities into the Summer Jobs+ Bank, helping youth connect to jobs near them. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.dol.gov/summerjobs/>.

ODDS AND ENDS

- The February 2012 edition of "School Days," the Department's monthly video journal, features President Obama's naming of the first states to receive flexibility from the requirements of *No Child Left Behind*, Secretary Duncan's remarks at the Green Schools National Conference, and the unveiling of the RESPECT Project, aimed at elevating the teaching profession. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/blog/tag/school-days/>.
- Yesterday (March 22), the Secretary testified before the House Appropriations Committee on the President's Fiscal Year 2013 budget and the need for continued investment in education. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2012/03/duncan-heads-to-capitol-hill-for-budget-hearings/>.
- With March Madness underway, the Secretary praised the NCAA for making significant progress on raising the academic level for student athletes. In just a few years, to be eligible for post-season play, teams must be on track to graduate half of their players, which is an Academic Progress Rate (APR) of 930 out of 1,000. Three years ago, 21 teams in the men's tournament had APRs below 925. This year, only eight teams are under 925. And, in this year's women's tournament, only three teams are under 930. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2012/03/duncan-praises-ncaa-for-raising-academic-bar-for-athletes/>.
- Earlier this week, hundreds of students, teachers, school administrators, law enforcement officers and officials, policymakers, and members of the public joined Administration officials in Arlington, Texas, for a conference sponsored by the White House, in collaboration with the Departments of Education and Justice, on ensuring safe schools and communities for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people across the country. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2012/03/20/standing->

[safe-schools-communities](#).

- Late last month, the Administration kicked-off the new White House Young America Series at Arizona State University. Some 150 Young Americans in attendance created the agenda, discussed the most pertinent issues, and shared solutions. Among the issues discussed were civic engagement, education, and food policy. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2012/03/who-are-the-changemakers-in-your-community/>.

QUOTE TO NOTE

"In 2009, the Administration, with support from Congress, created a new and much more ambitious program for turning around low-performing schools.... For the first time, the Administration put serious resources into supporting school turnaround efforts, to the tune of \$4 billion. That money has gone to over 1,200 schools, each of which got a three-year grant of up to \$2 million a school.... Almost immediately, analysts, bloggers, and pundits virtually uniformly predicted that the SIG program would flop. They said it would be a terrible waste of time, talent, goodwill, and money. They said it would have little effect on student learning and outcomes. They said that, even if the program worked to turn around a few schools, it would never succeed at scale or produce lasting change. Fortunately, great teachers, great school leaders, great community partners -- and, most importantly, committed students -- didn't listen to the skeptics.... We are still getting the results of the first year of the program, but our preliminary data show that, after just a year, that commitment to change is producing dramatic gains in learning in a significant number of schools. None of these schools are where they need to be, or will be, yet. But, the progress and sense of momentum are real."

-- Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (3/19/12), in remarks at the "Building a Grad Nation" Summit

UPCOMING EVENTS

The invitation to this year's Labor-Management Collaboration Conference is now open. The conference, titled "Collaborating to Transform the Teaching Profession," will take place May 23 and 24 in Cincinnati. It will build on the principles of labor-management collaboration from last year's event in Denver by bringing teams together to talk about their collaborative work in transforming the teaching profession. School district and state teams interested in attending must complete an RSVP form and submit it by March 30 at 5:00 p.m. ET. If the conference is oversubscribed, the Department will randomly select attendees from those who RSVP. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/labor-management-collaboration>.

On April 23, following Earth Day, Secretary Duncan will announce winners of the Department's inaugural Green Ribbon Schools recognition award competition. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools/>.

In the next two weeks, the Department will exhibit at the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's Conference in Philadelphia (March 24-26) and the National Science Teachers Association's Conference in Indianapolis (March 29-April 1). If you are attending either of these events, please stop by the Department's booth.

Please feel free to contact the Office of Communications and Outreach with any questions:
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