



ACT NOW

Associated Chaffey Teachers



DECEMBER 2009

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

	<u>PAGE</u>
THE OPENING BELL	2-4
• MULTIPLE TEST MEASURES.....	2
• NAEP RESULTS.....	2
• MERIT PAY IN TEXAS.....	2
• DECISION-MAKING POWER.....	3
• THINK TANK TO DEVELOP MERIT PAY PLAN.....	3
• 40% JOB DISHEARTENED	3
• GATES /OBAMA SCHOOL REFORM EFFORT.....	3
• DUNCAN'S CLOSING SCHOOLS POLICY.....	4
• "WHOLE-SCHOOL" SEEN AS OUTDATED.....	4
WORKS 4ME.....	4

President's Message

★ **May Peace be your gift at Christmas.**
May the closeness of friends, the comfort of home, and the
Unity of our nation, renew your spirits this holiday season
May the peace and joy of the holiday season be with you
Now and throughout the coming year.

Have a Happy Holiday Season

Jan ★ ★



Characters Unite Award
WINNER!.....**BRIAN JEFFREY**

About the Award

As part of its Characters Unite community affairs campaign, which focuses on combating social injustices and bridging cultural divides. USA Network created the Characters Unite Award to recognize an individual who has made a significant difference in the efforts to fight discrimination, champion civil rights and increase respect. Nominations for the 2009 Award were submitted by the Characters Unite NGO partners. The award winner will receive a \$10,000 grant from USA Network to donate to his/her project or related nonprofit organization and will be featured on Charactersunite.com



Brian Jeffrey
High School English Teacher
Rancho Cucamonga, CA

Brian Jeffrey, an English Teacher at Los Osos High School in Rancho Cucamonga, CA, co-founded Socially Together and Naturally Diverse (STAND) after witnessing the racial divisions during lunchtime on his school's campus. STAND clubs have created a safe place where students can celebrate their diversity and confront racism, sexism, and homophobia and have spread across the country. He also created a group called Socially Together and Naturally Diverse, United Performers (STAND UP), which performs a play, "Experiences", that combines satire and drama to deal with prejudice and stereotyping.





THE OPENING BELL



Leading the News

Experts Recommend Using Multiple Tests To Measure Achievement

Education Week (10/8, Maxwell) reported that while the Department of Education “finalizes its rules for doling out \$4 billion” in Race to the Top funds, “a group of prominent testing experts is cautioning federal education officials on how they propose to use assessments to measure student achievement and teacher-quality improvements under the initiative.” The National Academies’ Board on Testing and Assessment “wrote in an Oct. 5 letter to Education Secretary Arne Duncan that he...should

‘pursue vigorously the use of multiple indicators of what students know and can do,’ in the Race to the Top competition.” Furthermore, the testing experts “warned against using a single test, such as the National Assessment of Education Progress, or NAEP, to measure growth in student achievement, and also suggested that the department’s plans to use student growth data to evaluate teachers could be premature.”

Leading the News

Math Achievement Growth Has Stalled, NAEP Results Show

The New York Times, (10/5, A 18, Dillon) reports that new National Assessment of Educational Progress math scores “show that student achievement grew faster during the years before [NCLB], when states were dominant in education policy, than over the years since, when the federal law has become a powerful force in classrooms.” According to the Times, NAEP scores “increased only marginally for eighth graders and not at all for fourth graders, continuing a sluggish six-year trend of slowing

achievement growth since passage” of NCLB, “which requires schools to bring 100 percent of students to reading and math proficiency by 2014.” The New York Times (10/15, A1, Medina) reports in a separate story on its front page, “New York State’s fourth and eighth graders made no notable progress” on NAEP “math exams this year, according to test scores released on Wednesday, sharply contradicting the results of state-administered tests that showed record gains.”

Leading the News

Study Shows Merit Pay in Texas Did Not Boost Student Achievement

The Dallas Morning News (11/4, Stutz) reports that “for the \$300 million spent on merit pay for teachers over the last three years, Texas was hoping for a big boost in student achievement. But it didn’t happen with the now-defunct” Texas Educator Excellence Grant (TEEG), “according to experts hired by the state.” Researchers from Texas A&M University, Vanderbilt University, and the University of Missouri studied “flaws in the way the program was designed and did not conclude whether merit pay for teachers in

general is a good idea.” However, they did say, “There is no systematic evidence that TEEG had an impact on student achievement gains” in Texas. The Dallas Morning News noted that TEEG, “which provided incentive pay for teachers at about 1,000 campuses a year in lower-income neighborhoods, was discontinued by the Legislature after the 2008-09 school year because of design problems.



THE OPENING BELL (CONT'D)



On the Job

Lack of Decisionmaking Power Seen As Increasing Stress Among Teachers

University of New Hampshire Professor of English Thomas Newkirk writes in an op-ed for Education Week (10/21), "Until fairly recently, psychologists accepted the common-sense view that job stress was directly related to the significance of the decisions being made." However, "A longitudinal study of male civil servants in Great Britain, now referred to as the Whitehall Study," found that "mortality rates, as well as a range of stress-related illnesses, were inversely related to job status." Researchers "concluded that, contrary to popular wisdom, the lower-status workers experienced more stress precisely because they had less control over their work...When teachers lose control of decision-making," when teachers "must abandon units they love because there is no longer time, when they must follow the plans designed by others, when they are locked in systems of instruction and evaluation they don't create or even choose - they will not be relieved of stress.

On the Job

Pittsburgh Public Schools Poised To Hire Think Tank To Develop Merit Pay Plan

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (10/23, Smydo) reports, "The Pittsburgh school board Wednesday approved a \$1.8 million contract with a New Jersey think tank that's going to help the school district develop a pay-for-performance plan for teachers." If the school system receives "a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation," it will pay Mathematics Policy Research Inc. of Princeton, New Jersey, to "help the district develop 'multiple measures of effective teaching,' including a way to measure a teacher's impact on students' standardized test scores." The Pittsburgh district "is in line to receive a major share of \$500 million" the Gates Foundation "has earmarked for teacher effectiveness programs. It hasn't said how much Pittsburgh would receive."

On the Job

New Study Finds That 40 Percent Of K-12 Teachers Are "Disheartened" About Jobs

Valerie Strauss wrote in an "Answer Sheet" blog for the Washington Post (10/23) that a new study conducted by Public Agenda with Learning Point Associates finds that 40 percent of the nation's 4 million K-12 teachers "are 'disheartened' about their jobs. The vast majority think that there is too much standardized testing and that it is a 'drawback' to teaching." According to Strauss, the results of the study, titled "Teaching for a Living: How Teachers See the Profession Today," "should be noted by federal policy-makers who are doling out billions of federal dollars for reform efforts. Education secretary Arne Duncan has disappointed many educators who had hoped that he would change the strong emphasis the Bush administration had placed on standardized testing. He hasn't.

On the Job

Gates Foundation Partnering With Obama Administration In School Reform Effort.

The AP (10/25, Quaid, Blankinship) reported that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation "has been the biggest player by far in the school reform movement, spending around \$200 million a year on grants to elementary and secondary education." Now, the foundation "is taking unprecedented steps to influence education policy, spending millions to influence how the federal government distributes \$5 billion" in stimulus grants "to overhaul public schools." The foundation "is offering \$250,000 apiece to help states apply, so long as they agree with the foundation's approach. Obama and the Gates Foundation share some goals that not everyone embraces: paying teachers based on student test scores, among other measures of achievement; charter schools that operate independently of local school boards, and a set of common academic standards adopted by every state.



THE OPENING BELL (CONT'D)

Report Questions Duncan's Policy of Closing Failing Schools

The New York Times (10/29, A17, Dillon reports that Secretary of Education Arne Duncan "presided over the closing of dozens of failing schools when he was chief executive of the Chicago public schools from 2001 until last December. In his new post, he has drawn on those experiences, putting school turnaround efforts at the center of the nation's education reform agenda." Now, a study by University of Chicago researchers "concluded that most students in schools that closed in the first five years of Mr. Duncan's tenure in Chicago saw little benefit... Furthermore, the disruptions of routines in schools scheduled to be closed appeared to hurt student learning in the months after the closing was announced, the researchers found." DOE spokesman Justin Hamilton "noted that the report also found that students who ended up in higher-achieving schools showed more gains on standardized tests."

"Whole-School" Teacher Development Meeting Seen As Outdated

Ross Hunefeld writes in an opinion piece for Education Week (11/4, Hunefeld) that "whole-school workshop sessions that many [teachers] have experienced are what I'll call 'old PD'" It is professional development in the form of an expert up front and teachers listening passively." According to Hunefeld, "if improved teaching practice and better student outcomes are the goal, then these methods of keeping teachers up to date and growing professionally are not working." He adds that "current research suggest...that teachers don't improve by listening to someone tell them how to do something newer or better in their classrooms. They learn by working together to address problems they themselves identify in their schools and classrooms."



Works4Me

Ideas and tips by teachers, for teachers

Tips!

Late Homework Pass

from C Sanders, a high school teacher in Brooten, Minnesota

"Some teachers reward students by giving them a free homework pass that allows them to skip a homework assignment. I think this is a really bad idea, because it implies that the homework wasn't important. Instead of a free homework pass, consider giving your students a late homework pass that allows them to hand in an assignment one day late without penalty. This can be used for those rare times when grandma came over unexpectedly, the playoffs are going on, or a kid was ill the evening before but felt well enough to come to school the next day. Then, instead of excusing students from doing the valuable and necessary work, we are just letting them have a little extra time to complete it."

Greeting at the Door Puts You in Charge

from Kate Ortiz, a teacher in Chariton, Iowa

"I recommend greeting students at the classroom door, because it establishes you as a person in charge, models the respectful kind of interaction you expect to have happen in the classroom, and provides you with a brief connection to each student. I have found, for example, that if a student is wound up, a brief greeting can have a calming effect."