

Education News December 13-19, 2008



Keeping you current on the latest news in education courtesy of our partner, TeachersCount.

Obama Names Chicago's Arne Duncan his Secretary of Education

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/16/us/politics/16educ.html?ref=education>

(New York Times, December 15, 2008) On Tuesday, President Elect Barack Obama named Chicago school's superintendent Arne Duncan as his secretary of education. Duncan is known for making strong steps toward reform, while maintaining a good relationship with the teachers' unions, and represents a compromise choice in the "get tough on teachers and schools" vs. "new investments in clinics social programs" debate over reform. He falls in line with Obama in the idea that neither side is right, but that both bring valid arguments to the table and arguing will achieve nothing. Obama and Duncan have known each other for nearly two decades, and became close when Duncan became chief executive of Chicago Public Schools in 2001. Interestingly, Duncan himself has no formal teaching experience. Duncan values early childhood education as one of the most effective ways to spend education dollars.

ADHD Medication Adderall Gains Popularity During Exam Times

http://www.denverpost.com/education/ci_11233551

(Denver Post, December 15, 2008) Despite the risks and side effects, college students continue to take Adderall, a drug prescribed to millions to combat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), at ever increasing rates. It is consumed with even higher voracity during exam time, due to its notoriety for being able to help you absorb and retain vast amounts of information or crank out a term paper. In an effort to curtail usage, the University of Colorado has made it more difficult to obtain the "scholastic steroid." Students must be evaluated by a psychologist and then a psychiatrist, and if they do receive Adderall, or another other medication such as Ritalin, they receive a prescription for one month and are reevaluated every three months. Even so, CU sees a 20% spike in filling of Adderall prescriptions leading up to finals, but that doesn't necessarily mean that the drugs are being misused.

Georgian State Senator Suggests Merging Black, White Universities

[http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/12/17/MN8L14PCV5.DTL&type=education)

[bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/12/17/MN8L14PCV5.DTL&type=education](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/12/17/MN8L14PCV5.DTL&type=education)

(San Francisco Chronicle, December 17, 2008) As budget battles mount in Georgia, Seth Harp, Chairman of the State Senate's Higher Education Committee, has proposed merging two of the states historically black colleges with 2 nears by white schools, Savannah State University with Armstrong Atlantic State University and Albany State University with Darton College, in order to save money and, in his words “close this ugly chapter in Georgia's history.” The colleges would keep the names of the older and more established colleges, which, in both cases, is the black-college. Opposition fears that this may prevent black students who otherwise would not have gone to college from attending and point to the fact that African Americans perform better and have a lower dropout rate in the black-college settings compared to at predominantly white colleges. Any such mergers would need approval by the Georgia Board of Regents, which, at this time, does not plan to approve the mergers.

Veteran Educator Ramon Cortines to Lead L.A. School System

<http://www.latimes.com/news/education/la-me-laschools17-2008dec17,0,5323493.story>

(Los Angeles Times, December 17, 2008) On Tuesday, the LA school board chose Ramon Cortines to head the LA school system, the second largest school system in the nation. Cortines worked as interim superintendent in 2000, and has headed schools in NYC, San Francisco, San Jose and Pasadena. He replaces the previous superintendent, David L. Brewer, who was bought out midway through a four year contract. Unlike his predecessor, Cortines is already known and admired by both Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. At 76 years of age, Cortines differs from the wave of youthful superintendents elsewhere in the country, such as Michelle Rhee and Arne Duncan. Faced with \$200-\$400 million in budget cuts, Cortines doesn't see this as an excuse for lack of school improvement, and plans to focus on accountability for administrators as he figures out the budget.

Future Secretary of Education Duncan to Tackle NCLB

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/content/education/chi-duncan-classroom-17dec17,0,1937617.story>

(Chicago Tribune, December 17, 2008) As Arne Duncan prepares to bring his own brand of education reform to Washington, expectations are that he will apply flexibility to No Child Left Behind, a standard often criticized for its rigidity. While students will most likely still have to take high stakes tests, Duncan and Obama wish to develop a more nuanced system to determine a school's success. In the past, Duncan has praised the accountability and high expectations of NCLB, but criticized the one-size-fits-all approach and limited funding. While he remains short on specifics, Duncan plans to meet with teachers, administrators and business leaders in an effort to bring talented people with competing views together to forge the best solution. Some experts anticipate Duncan will back away from the 2014 deadline of every child being able to read and do math at grade level, while others suggest he may focus on the skill level students need to obtain upon graduating.

Google Joins 300 Other Business in Partnership with Fairfax County Schools

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/17/AR2008121701485.html>

(Washington Post, December 18, 2008) Google, in an effort to gain government business, has opened a new office in Reston, MD and announced its most recent partnership with Fairfax County School district. Google plans to outfit the school system with technology to help students learn geography using an advanced version of Google earth that will be free to students. This deal is the latest in 300 partnerships that Fairfax has made with businesses. Other partnerships include Exxon Mobil donations for science math and engineering, and a major credit card company donating books. The businesses also benefit, as they view these partnerships as a way to invest in America's future workforce.

Maryland Policy Allows Exit Exam Waiver for Students at Risk of Not Graduating

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/18/AR2008121802672.html>

(Washington Post, December 19, 2008) A new policy, passed unanimously by the Maryland State Board of Education, provides a new path for the 4,000 Maryland high school seniors who have not passed or not taken at least one of the High School Assessments, a set of four exams in algebra, English, biology and government. The class of 2009 is the first to face a state test-score standard in order to graduate, which originally required a minimum score on each test. Now, students can also graduate if they achieve a minimum combined score or, if a student fails a test twice, he or she can complete a project that demonstrates mastery of that subject. The new waiver policy, which will be effective for one year, allows students who have completed courses, met attendance requirements and then taken and failed a test, to appeal to the school principal if they have had problems with course scheduling, remedial test preparation, or extenuating circumstances such as a long-term illness or death of a parent. The majority of students affected by the waiver would be those in ESL or special education programs.

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