

# EDUCATION DAILY®

The education community's independent daily news service

## SCHOOL SAFETY

### Proposed bill would sustain positive behavior supports

Character education looming as congressional issue

By Frank Wolfe

The National Education Association and the National PTA are two of more than 50 organizations that lent their support this week to a House bill promoting the use of positive behavior supports to bolster school safety and improve school climate and academic achievement.

“Through reinforcing desired behaviors and eliminating inadvertent reinforcements for problem behavior, educational systems will be able to change how schools respond to students and effectively realize the twin goals of academic and social successes for all students,” according to a letter sent this week to Rep. Phil Hare, D-Ill., the sponsor of H.R. 2597, the Positive Behavior for Safe and Effective Schools Act.

The bill would direct federal funds to schools that develop innovative programs to reward positive behavior to improve school climate and safety and increase academic performance.

H.R. 2597 would also give schools the flexibility to use Title I dollars for schoolwide positive behavior support programs and stipulates that funds must be aligned with the provisions of IDEA. The legislation has been referred to the House Education and Labor Committee.

The endorsement came the same week that two panels of the House Education and Labor Committee heard school safety groups highlight the importance of character education programs in turning around schools and improving safety.

The legislation was first introduced in 2007 by Hare and then-Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill. — H. 3407 in the House and S. 2111 in the Senate. At that time, a draft of NCLB reauthorization legislation by House Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller provided that schools failing to make adequate yearly progress should use positive behavioral supports and interventions and that school improvement dollars under Title I could be used for that purpose.

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## Today's Highlights

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## HIGH SCHOOL REFORM

### Include broader indicators on NAEP, study says

Report advises federal involvement in capacity building

By Frank Wolfe

To help improve high school performance, the federal government should broaden the indicators on the National Assessment of Educational Progress to include measures of student success beyond math and reading skills, according to a new draft report by Russell Rumberger, a University of California, Santa Barbara professor and director of the California Dropout Research Project.

Many standardized tests “do a poor job of measuring state standards, [while] accountability systems tend to measure performance in a limited number of subjects, resulting in reduced attention to other subject areas, especially for students who are not yet proficient in the requisite subjects,” according to the draft paper, *What the Federal Government Can Do to Improve High School Performance*.

“More importantly, academic achievement tests ignore other, non-cognitive outcomes that are critical to success in college and careers, and to effective citizenship.”

In a recent Capitol Hill forum sponsored by the Center on Education Policy, which commissioned

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# Advocate: Juvenile justice programs need revamping

Education reforms should also reach students in justice system, he says

By James Michael Brodie

Get-tough laws that have put more teenagers in adult prisons since the early 1990s conflict with a wave of new research suggesting how youth can be better-served, and the public better-protected, through effective juvenile justice education programs.

One juvenile justice advocate argued that youth caught up in the system have not been given enough of a chance to turn their lives around after committing offenses.

"There really is a school-to-juvenile-justice-to-criminal-justice pipeline," said Shay Bilchik, research professor and director of the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and Systems Integration at Georgetown Public Policy Institute, at the recent National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At Risk conference.

Bilchik, who led the Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention during the Clinton administration, said, "We have a growing body of knowledge about what works with at-risk kids," and urged legislators and policymakers to move toward programs that offer students in the juvenile justice system a chance at an education.

"If we are viewing the work by the way we did things in the past 10 to 15 years, we are missing the boat," he said. "We need to create an education system that takes us to the next level of practice and policy."

Bilchik said many of the strategies that can lead to good outcomes for general education students could be effective for students in the juvenile justice system, including:

- Smaller class sizes.
- Personalized education experiences.
- High standards and expectations.
- Counseling services.
- Parental involvement.
- Extended learning time.
- Quality instruction.

Bilchik said states also need to rethink some of their juvenile justice policies, such as having 16- and 17-year-olds tried as adults, regardless of the type of

crime — as is the case currently in North Carolina. Such laws do little to promote safety, and don't help youth offenders turn their lives around, he said.

"We have to look at how the things we do provide opportunities and hope and love in their lives," Bilchik said. "If we get this right, we will have a better chance of advancing outcomes."

## Federal, state supports

Policymakers at the federal and state levels are beginning to share Bilchik's vision. Last summer, the Justice Department concluded reducing the overall number of juvenile offenders transferred to the criminal-justice system could have a positive impact on recidivism.

And while President Obama's proposed 2010 budget sought to cut funding for several youth programs, including juvenile justice grants, the administration has proposed using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds to help prop up successful juvenile justice programs.

Some states are heeding the call. In Georgia, ARRA funding is being used to target juvenile prevention and intervention efforts by adding police officers to work with schools and communities.

New York is looking to use the funds for after-care programs and reentry services, such as family reunification programs, job placement of offenders re-entering the community, and residential stabilization through building of housing. The state also hopes to restore juvenile crime prevention and school-based programs.

Meanwhile, Missouri is phasing out its large juvenile-detention institutions in favor of smaller ones that are closer to the students' neighborhoods and offer specialized services such as mental-health and drug counseling. State officials said the move has reduced recidivism rates for juvenile offenders to 10 percent, compared with national rates of as much as 50 percent.

"This is a very interesting time. Any new administration creates a new hope," Bilchik said. "We need to make sure none of our children and families falls through the cracks. Our focus must be in the context of communities."



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## Duncan: Unions at 'crossroad' on evaluations, tenure policies

American Federation of Teachers committee to issue report in fall on moving forward

By Wangui Njuguna

Speaking at the National Education Association conference in San Diego last week, Education Secretary Arne Duncan said teachers unions are at "a crossroad" where they must reexamine whether their policies impede children's access to quality education.

Duncan challenged unions to embrace the use of data, including student test-scores for accountability purposes, and to consider how best to evaluate the impact that teachers and principals have on student success, particularly in the 5,000 schools nationally that have chronic under-performance.

"If we agree that the adults in these schools are failing these children, then we have to find the right people, and we can't let our rules and regulations get in the way," Duncan said. "Children have only one chance to get an education."

The unions responded by accepting his invitation for further discussions.

### Seeking assurances

In his speech at the conference, Duncan addressed the teacher quality assurances that states have to make in order to receive funds under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The law requires states to collect teacher and principal evaluation data and provide information about whether student achievement is linked to teachers' and principals' performance.

He called upon education stakeholders to lock themselves in a room, "throw out the rule books and start with a clean slate."

On the issue of tying teacher performance to student achievement, Duncan urged unions to regard test scores as a barometer of progress.

He said that while standardized test scores should not be used exclusively for teacher evaluation, compensation and tenure decisions, "to remove student achievement entirely from evaluation is illogical and indefensible."

"It's time we all admit that just as our testing system is deeply flawed, so is our teacher evaluation system and the losers are not just the children," he said.

The secretary emphasized that charter schools will be measured with the same yardstick as other public schools and collective accountability will come with schoolwide rewards to celebrate successes.

"When great teachers are unrecognized and unrewarded, when struggling teachers are unsupported, and when failing teachers are unaddressed, the teaching profession is damaged," he told the unions.

"We need to work together to fix this, and I will meet you more than halfway."

### Unions on board

Both the NEA and the American Federation of Teachers, the nation's two largest teachers unions, expressed a spirit of cooperation, but stressed that a middle ground has to be found on using test scores in teacher decisions.

"Secretary Duncan should be applauded for seeking the input of NEA members," NEA President Dennis Van Roekel said. "Educators know what their students and schools need, and we look forward to working with him. We have an unprecedented opportunity to improve public schools for all students."

Van Roekel left it to the educators at the conference to be more quizzical during the Q&A segment following Duncan's speech.

Many, in fact, did express reservations about whether test scores capture the quality of the teachers and their impact on children's educational experiences and whether teacher evaluations adequately define what teachers can and are expected to accomplish with students.

AFT President Randi Weingarten told *Education Daily*® that the union is willing to put evaluations, tenure and merit pay on the table.

AFT has established an ad hoc committee funded by the Carnegie Corp. and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to identify approaches to teacher evaluation and is slated to issue a report this fall.

"I think that the idea of locking ourselves in a room is a great idea," Weingarten said.

"Having principals do an evaluation a year or a couple of years hasn't worked, but on the flip side, the newest way of basing entire evaluations by using standardized test scores, even though using test scores for evaluations has not been validated, is even more flawed than principal observations."

Peer assistance and review is one approach that may be a middle ground issue, said Weingarten, but "if we only look at [teacher policy] as punitive, it won't work. It has to be a blueprint for growth."

Hear Duncan's speech at [www.nea.org/duncan](http://www.nea.org/duncan).

**NAEP** (continued from page 1)

the study, Rumberger said broader indicators could include statistical data such as attendance and tardiness. He said indicators could also include other, more subjective measures evaluated by teachers, such as student cooperation, participation and leadership skills.

“We could probably improve high schools just by focusing on some different types of outcomes,” Rumberger said at the forum. He added that the federal government’s reform efforts will only succeed if they provide incentives to build capacity for schools, their personnel, and their communities for reform.

The draft paper comes as the Obama administration has pledged to devote significant attention to high schools, which many educators believe were given short shrift under NCLB. Barely a month after taking office, Obama said that “dropping out of high school is no longer an option.” Secondary school reform, however, will be arduous, as past federal efforts — dropout prevention, vocational education, comprehensive school reform, and smaller learning communities — have failed to make widespread, significant improvements in classroom teaching and student outcomes, according to the draft paper.

Rumberger’s counsel on NAEP appears to align with statements by Obama, who has decried what he viewed as NCLB’s single-minded focus on test scores. Rumberger’s philosophy also is in line with the findings of James Heckman, the Nobel laureate professor of economics at the University

of Chicago who has said that non-cognitive factors play a crucial role in career success.

Though it will likely be a hard sell to get the National Assessment Governing Board to adopt broader indicators, NAEP included such indicators in the early years, after its first administration in 1969 but before political pressure forced the government to turn the focus toward academic skills, according to Rumberger.

In addition to expanding the set of NAEP indicators, the draft paper advises the federal government to work with states and school districts to ensure that the neediest high schools with the least capacity select the appropriate improvement strategy and receive the necessary support to implement that strategy. Under NCLB, by contrast, such schools have been required to select from a menu of options, such as replacing staff or reopening as a charter school.

Rumberger also advises that the federal government develop coherent policies for high school reform and work closely with state governments and technical assistance providers to build capacity for addressing the needs of at-risk groups, such as English-language-learners and dropouts.

Finally, the paper advises the federal government to support the development of state and local data systems to measure a school’s capacity to initiate reform — not just educational inputs and outputs.

Federal high school reform strategies “must address the will and capacity of both individual educators and educational institutions,” according to the paper.

**SCHOOL SAFETY****BEHAVIOR** (continued from page 1)

H.R. 2597 defines “positive behavior supports” as a “systematic approach to embed proven practices for early intervening services, including a range of systemic and individualized strategies to reinforce desired behaviors and eliminate reinforcement for problem behaviors, in order to achieve important social outcomes and increase learning, while preventing problem behaviors for all students including those with the most complex and intensive behavioral needs.”

**Early intervention**

The most widely known positive behavior program — the School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports system, formerly known as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports — is designed to intervene early to prevent disciplinary problems from arising and to create safe and effective learning environments by teaching behavior expectations and rewarding good behavior.

The program has operated in more than 7,000 schools nationally, and Illinois has one of

the largest networks, with more than 650 schools and 20 percent of the state’s school districts using the program. Illinois’ state data for 2006-07 showed that middle schools fully implementing the program had 9,849 fewer office discipline referrals for their students than schools that only partially implemented the program — a gain of 821 instructional days for schools under full implementation.

“Good behavior is contagious,” Hare said. “When schools recognize and reward students for doing the right thing, the sky is the limit. We must move beyond the punitive disciplinary systems of the past and encourage students to live up to our expectations.”

In addition to allowing schools to use federal education dollars to implement early intervention programs, including SW-PBS, Hare’s bill provides for the training of teachers to manage classrooms effectively using SW-PBS and for the establishment of an office within the Education Department that focuses on behavioral intervention services.