

Education Matters

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The Promise of

Value-Added Assessment

By Robert Holland

The year was 1994 and Deana Bishop had just received her first teacher Value-Added Assessment report from her principal at Sam Houston Elementary School in Maryville, Tennessee. There were numbers galore. They had something to do with the state's latest venture in school reform.

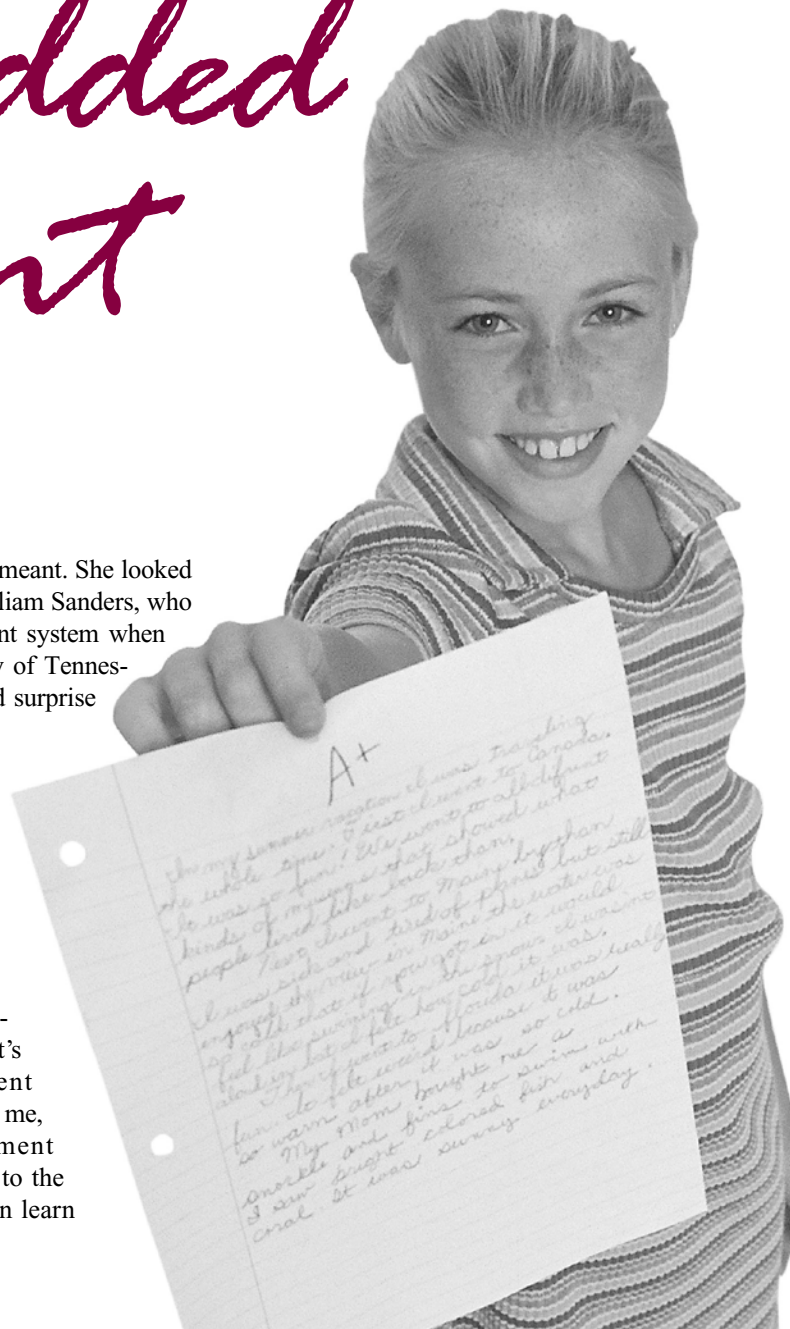
The report did come with wording attempting to explain the statistics but that was all the information Deana had. So the second-year teacher glanced at the document, didn't think much more about it, and just filed it away—as did many of her colleagues.

That young teacher never dreamed what a profound effect the value-added concept eventually would have on her teaching.

After a few more years of classroom experience, Bishop noticed that her "V" for Value-Added file folder was growing awfully thick, and so she decided to try to fig-

ure what those numbers meant. She looked into the work of Dr. William Sanders, who pioneered this assessment system when he was at the University of Tennessee, and she experienced surprise No. 1:

"I found a philosophy of education I completely agreed with," said Deana. "Value-Added Assessment was just a way to measure a student's academic growth over a school year, regardless of the student's beginning achievement level," Bishop noted. "To me, Value-Added Assessment gives measurable proof to the idea that all students can learn and be successful."





“Fair comparisons could help students at both the low and high ends of the achievement spectrum, while helping teachers, too.”

She dug deeper by looking into what schools with excellent value-added marks were doing differently. She found that they were assessing students and then planning their curriculum and instruction to meet the students' individual needs, “not just blindly teaching the standards.”

Deana Bishop then plunged into her dusty Value-Added file to see what patterns she could detect in her own teaching. That yielded surprise No. 2—indeed, she now says “what I discovered was life-changing.”

She found that her instruction and curriculum had been highly effective for low- and average-achieving students, but her highest-achieving students were not showing the growth during their time with her that they should. Feeling she had let them down, she vowed to change that.

To better meet the needs of all students, she concluded that she had to know who they were. Bishop incorporated more and better forms of assessment into her classroom so that she would know when certain students were ready to move on or when they needed varied approaches.

“To an outsider,” recalled Bishop, who now is her school's Technology Coordinator, “my classroom would have looked much more fragmented than before, but the reality was that I was trying to implement what Dr. Sanders' data had showed me. In my classroom you would see reading circles of various levels going on, multiple math assignments for different students, students

working on projects and in cooperative groups, technology integrated into those daily assignments, but most importantly you would see instruction and curriculum being driven by the needs of my students.”

As a result, the value-added scores of her high achievers did improve markedly, as did the scores for all her students. Some other teachers have discovered that their lower-achieving students were the ones not making progress, and so they have adjusted accordingly. The point is, say advocates, that the value-added approach helps students of all levels, as individuals.

The Word is Spreading

The Value-Added Assessment has spread far beyond Tennessee. In 2003, the Ohio legislature approved a measure that will incorporate value-added principles in the state's school accountability system by 2007. A business-led reform coalition called Battelle for Kids launched a pilot project with 42 Ohio school districts (which has now grown to 110 districts) and convinced state lawmakers of value-added's merit. Mike Nicholson, the Battelle project's Coordinator of Assessment and Analysis tells of a “well-heeled school district” that learned its lower math achievers were making distinctly less progress than the high achievers. The problem? With the best of intentions, the school system had been stretching a year's math curriculum over two years, in the belief it would serve the low achievers

well. But value-added analysis showed that a limited curriculum was only exacerbating the achievement gap.

Battelle for Kids held a National Value-Added Conference in Ohio last year and more than 500 educators from 17 states attended. Nicholson expects even greater numbers at the second conference October 17-18 in Columbus.

At the federal level, Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings has invited states to consider “growth models”—another term for value-added—in measuring their schools' effectiveness. In California, Pacific Research Institute scholars Harold C. Dornan and Lance T. Izumi recently developed a proposed value-added component intended to help all students meet federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) targets. They argued that California's targeting percentages of students within each school who attain proficiency encourages schools to focus year to year on those students closest to reaching the minimum benchmark.

“Most accountability models wrongly focus on current status,” they wrote. “Current status measures are concerned with how groups of students have performed at a single point in time, ignoring how much they have improved over a specific period of time.”

Some critics believe NCLB itself encourages that “snapshot” approach, and should be modified.

Research Based

Value-Added Assessment got its start in 1983 when Tennessee first ventured into legislated education reform by emphasizing basic skills and a version of merit pay for teachers. It was then that Bill Sanders and his colleagues at the University of Tennessee began independently exploring the feasibility of employing a statistical methodology to overcome real-world problems in using student achievement as an instrument of assessment—i.e., transient students, missing records, shifting teacher assignments, and the blurring of individual input with team teaching.

Drawing on volumes of student achievement data from Knox County, the Sanders team was able to detect measurable, consistent differences among teachers with regard to their effect on student performance. With effective teachers, students could make gains no matter what their ability or achievement levels were when they started.

When the State of Tennessee went into its second phase of results-oriented education reform, the assessment system produced by the Sanders team was ready. With the enactment of the Education Improvement Act in 1991, Tennessee Value-Added Assessment gained a key role in analyzing data on how public education was doing its primary job of raising student achievement. Teachers like Deana Bishop in Maryville began receiving their first value-added reports.

Now, each teacher receives a report card based on a sophisticated analysis of norm-referenced testing data showing the year-to-year progress of his or her students. Supervisors also receive these reports.

Research by Sanders and others establishes that good teaching matters. Unfortunately, poor teaching also has a profound impact. The researchers have found that students unfortunate enough to have a succession of poor teachers are virtually doomed to the education cellar. Three consecutive years of 1st quintile (least effective) teachers in grades 3 to 5 yield math scores from the 35th to 45th percentile. Conversely,

three straight years of 5th quintile teachers result in scores at the 85th to 95th percentile. Put another way, students with three straight years of effective teachers had 60 percent greater achievement than those unfortunate enough to have a succession of ineffective teachers.

A Boost for Teachers

One of the nicest features of Value-Added Assessment is the boost it gives to teachers who do a superior job helping low-achieving students. Often these teachers labor in obscurity, their work unappreciated or even devalued by lack of public understanding of the difficult challenges they face. By focusing on gains, value-added analysis can identify good teachers who are successful with low achievers as well as poor teachers who permit high achievers to coast. Fair comparisons could help students at both the low and high ends of the achievement spectrum, while helping teachers, too.

In a larger perspective, Value-Added Assessment could revolutionize how teachers are trained, hired, evaluated, retrained,

rewarded, or sometimes encouraged to find a different line of work. From California to Virginia, merit pay for teachers is an idea finally nearing the top of the reform agenda. Bonuses for measurable value added to a child's education could become standard operating policy someday.

The founder of the online Education Consumers Clearinghouse, John Stone, summarized the advantages of Value-Added Assessment this way: "The adoption of Sanders' Value-Added Assessment may be the single most important step a state can take to improve its schools, because it permits teachers, principals, and parents to see what's working and what isn't."

That is what Deana Bishop discovered years ago, and a growing number of teachers each year are joining her in their praise for Value-Added Assessment. ■

Robert Holland is an education policy analyst for the Lexington Institute in Arlington, VA. Portions of this article were adapted from his book, *To Build a Better Teacher*, published by Praeger in 2004.

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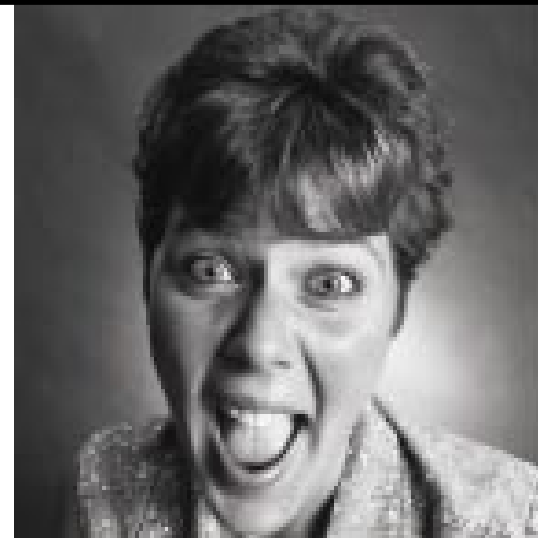
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College Un-Prep

Are schools or students to blame?

By Neal P. McCluskey

College instructors, employers, and recent public high school graduates are dissatisfied with graduates' preparation for college or employment according to *Rising to the Challenge*, a new report from Achieve, Inc. But it's much less clear who is to blame: schools or students?

Nearly 40 percent of high school graduates surveyed said there were gaps in their high school preparation for college or employment. Employers and college instructors agreed, with the former estimating 39 percent of recent graduates were unprepared for entry-level jobs, and 25 percent of the latter saying incoming students were inadequately prepared for college.

While flaws in recent graduates' preparation for life after high school were easily identified, the causes were not. Large percentages of graduates reported they did not work as hard as they



could have in high school, noting that if they knew in high school what they discovered afterwards, they would have put in more effort.

Low Standards at Fault

The students tended to blame the schools, rather than themselves, for their limited effort. About 80 percent said that if their schools had demanded it they would have worked harder.

Public Agenda's recently

released survey, *Life After High School: Young People Talk about Their Hopes and Prospects*, corroborates Achieve's findings. In Public Agenda's report, 62 percent of graduates who went to college, and 78 percent who went straight to work, said they could have worked harder in high school.

But those students, too, tended to blame the schools for their problems, with 48 percent who went to work, and 38 percent who went to college, saying their teachers and classes "should have done a lot more" to prepare them for life after graduation.

So are low standards to blame for graduates' shortfalls, or students themselves? In both *Rising to the Challenge* and Achieve's December 2004 report, *The Expectations Gap—A 50-State Review of High School Graduation Requirements*, low standards are fingered.

Just as large percentages of

respondents in *Rising to the Challenge* thought increasing standards would improve high school students' preparation, *The Expectations Gap* concluded every state should bolster curriculum requirements.

Student Apathy

Other studies, however, suggest the problem might be that American students simply do not value academics.

In 2001, The Brookings Institution's Brown Center on Education Policy surveyed foreign students who studied in American high schools, and in 2002 it surveyed American students who went abroad. Both surveys found American students care much less about academic studies than do students in other societies and that U.S. students emphasize athletics and employment much more than do their counterparts. ■

Source: School Reform News, a publication of Heartland Institute, www.heartland.org.

The World According to College Students

A professor's compilation of actual term papers and exams from students.

In 1848, unemployment became a crisis in Paris. Out of a city of one million people, two million able bodies were on the loose.

The Irish had to immigrate to the United States because of Hitler.

North Africa is the region which lies in the northern part of Africa. It is therefore not in Africa. Without a doubt this was

the Middle East, where all bets were misplaced. Arab leaders ran head in tail with the Soviets.

One major source of conflict since World War II has been Israel's relations with the Parisians. The Carter administration found itself face to face with this problem during the so-called Iran Hostess Crisis.

The Civil Rights movement in the USA turned around the corner with Martin Luther Junior's famous "If I Had a Hammer" speech. Martian Luther King's four steps to direct action included self purification, when you allow yourself to be eaten to a pulp. The wealing and dealing of President Lynda B. Johnson was another important factor.

The Berlin Wall was built somewhere in Europe. President Kennedy soothed the masses, however, with his story about "Itch Ben the Berliner."

Wars fought in the 1950s and after included the Crimean War, Vietnam, the Six-Minute War. President Eisenhower

Cash Grants for Teachers to Use American Music

For the seventh year, the National Music Foundation will award cash grants of up to one thousand dollars to teachers who create lesson plans using American music.

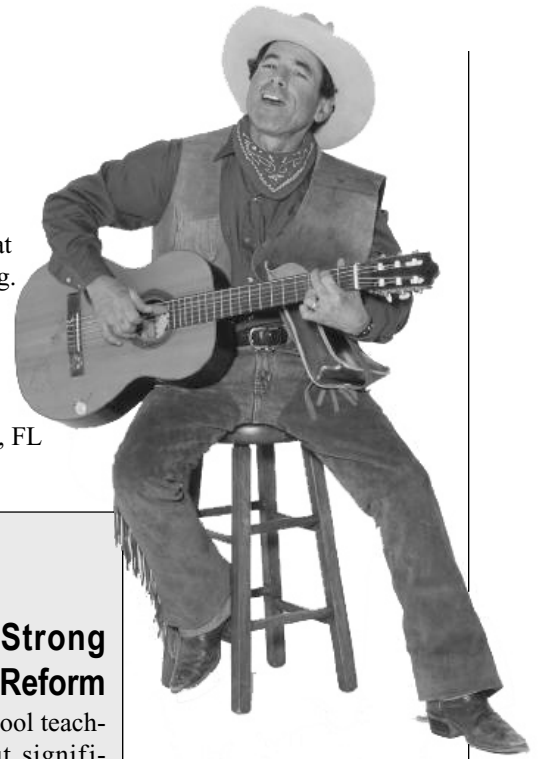
The program is open to teachers of any subject, in any grade K-12, and in any academic setting as long as

they use American music. Completed applications must be received by Monday, September 19, 2005. E-mail submissions are encouraged.

To see previous award winning lesson plans, visit www.usamusic.org. Applications and guidelines are available on the website or

by contacting the American Music Education Initiative at AMEI@usamusic.org.

To contact the Foundation by mail, write AMEI, 2457A South Hiawassee Road, #244, Orlando, FL 32835.



U.S. Averages One District Administrator for Every 47 Teachers

On average, school districts employ one administrator for every forty-seven teachers, reports the Education Intelligence Agency (EIA). This number refers to superintendents, assistant superintendents, resource managers, and other professionals who work at district-level offices. It does *not* include school administrators such as principals, state agency officials, or even district support staff.

Among states, South Carolina has the lowest ratio of administrators-to-teachers, with one school district administrator for every 171 full-time equivalent teachers. Utah ranks second at 1:133, and Louisiana third at 1:126. New Mexico has the highest ratio with one school district administrator for every 17.5 full-time equivalent teachers. North Dakota and Ohio rank near the bottom with 1:18.6, and 1:19.7, respectively.

The full rankings are available as Table 7 on EIA's school pay and staffing statistics web page at <http://www.eiaonline.com/statistics.htm>.

Source: The Education Intelligence Agency (EIA) Communiqué.

Pay Grade Teacher Poll: Strong Support of Pay Reform

How do public school teachers really feel about significant changes being made to teacher pay? A recent poll reveals strong support for teacher compensation reform from not only the general public but also, most importantly, from teachers themselves.

While a strong majority of the general public (70 percent) favors raising teacher salaries across the board, there's even more support (80 percent) for combining such increases with rewards for raising student achievement, higher standards for the profession, and more accountability.

There is overwhelming support (nearly 80 percent) from both the general public and teachers for offering higher salaries to teachers willing to work in high-poverty schools. Teachers are less sure than the general public (71 percent versus 52 percent) that teachers in high-shortage subject areas ought to get higher salaries but, let it be duly noted, there's still a majority.

For the full results of the report, visit www.theteachingcommission.org

Source: The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) TQ Bulletin, a weekly e-mail newsletter. NCTQ website: www.nctq.org.

Public School Enrollment Up

Fueled by rising immigration and the baby boom echo, U.S. public school enrollment has increased steadily through the early 2000s and is expected to peak at an all-time high of 50 million in 2014, according to a report released last month by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics.

The Condition of Education 2005 found that 42 percent of public school students were racial or ethnic minorities in 2003, markedly up from 22 percent in 1972. The report attributed this increased diversity to the proportionate growth of Hispanic enrollment, from 6 percent in 1972 to 19 percent in 2003. It noted that Hispanic enrollment nationwide surpassed that of African American students for the first time in 2002, while in the West region, minority public enrollment exceeded White enrollment in 2003.

The full text of The Condition of Education 2005, along with related data tables and indicators from previous years, can be viewed at <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe>.



resorted to the bully pool pit. John F. Kennedy worked closely with the Russians to solve the Canadian Missile Crisis.

Actually, the fall of empires has been a good thing, because it gives more people a chance to exploit their own people without outside interference.

Source: Non Campus Mentis, compiled by Anders Henriksson, Workman Publishing, New York, NY, 2001.

Rising to the Challenge

How one program is rewarding teachers for individual success in the classroom with increased pay and career advancement.



Research has shown that the single most important school-related factor for student success is having a talented teacher in the classroom. To this end, the Milken Family Foundation created the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), a bold new strategy to attract and retain talented people to the teaching profession. It improves student performance by reorganizing schools in ways that provide new incentives and support for teachers.

It restructures the school day to incorporate mentoring and professional development during the course of the day. In doing this, it offers career opportunities for teachers that are otherwise not usually available. It also rewards teachers for their expertise in the classroom and for the academic gains their students make while under their tutelage.

TAP's goal is to draw more talented people to the teaching profession—and keep them there—by making it more attractive and rewarding to be a teacher. Under the TAP system, good teachers can earn higher salaries and advance professionally, just as in other careers. And they can do it without leaving the classroom, where they

often are needed most. At the same time, TAP helps teachers become the best they can be by giving them opportunities to learn better teaching strategies and holding them accountable for their performance.

A recent study of TAP's initial demonstration schools in Arizona showed that all TAP schools made achievement gains in each of the first two years of implementation. In fact, schools that rigorously implemented TAP produced student achievement gains that were as much as 51 percent larger than control schools.

The program is currently being implemented in Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Louisiana, South Carolina, Indiana, and Minnesota.

The Superintendent of Vail, Colorado schools reported that TAP has helped his district improve teacher retention, garnered community support for teacher pay raises, fostered collaboration among teachers, and put the focus of school work back on student achievement. All professional staff members in this district are paid based on performance, and there is no lock-step salary. All staff work in tandem for student achievement.

The Teacher Advancement Program implements four key principles for its success: it offers multiple career paths, it provides market-driven compensation, it uses performance-based accountability, and it emphasizes ongoing professional growth.

Multiple Career Paths

Under the current system, the most common way for good teachers to increase their salaries is to become administrators. Unfortunately, this takes them out of the classroom, where they often are needed most. TAP allows teachers to pursue a variety of positions throughout their careers depending on their interests, abilities, and accomplishments. As they move up the ranks, their qualifications, roles, and responsibilities increase—and so does their compensation.

Market-Driven Compensation

In most professions, people are rewarded and promoted for how well they perform their jobs. Unfortunately, teaching has too often been the exception to this rule. TAP changes the current system by allowing schools the flexibility to compensate teach-

What others are saying about the Teacher Advancement Program



"I'm a big fan of the Teacher Advancement Program. [It offers] higher salaries to teachers in return for greater responsibility and accountability."

Rod Paige, former U.S. Secretary of Education



"The Teacher Advancement Program is the result of innovative, outside-the-box thinking. I believe that it has the potential to transform the teaching profession"

Inez Tenenbaum, South Carolina Superintendent of Education



The thing I find most appealing about TAP, and always have, is the fact that it focuses on the teacher and it gets the teacher at the forefront of the conversation.

Ken James, Arkansas Director of Education

ers according to their performance and the performance of their students. The new system also provides the opportunity to offer competitive salaries to those who teach in hard-to-staff subjects and schools.

Performance-Based Accountability

Most people agree that the best teachers should be paid more than ineffective teachers. But what makes an effective teacher? TAP has developed a comprehensive system for evaluating teachers that rewards them for how well they teach their students. These evaluations are based on a combination of criteria, including position responsibilities, classroom observations, and student test score gains.

Ongoing, Applied Professional Growth

Teachers seldom have time to learn new techniques and strategies that would help them become better teachers. Few teachers also get the chance to collaborate with each other or to learn from those with more experience. TAP requires a change in the school schedule that provides time during the regular school day for teachers to learn, plan, mentor, and share with other teachers, so they can constantly improve the quality of their instruction.

Implementing TAP

The program costs approximately 6 percent of an average school's current teaching staff budget (about \$400/student). Sources of funding that may be accessed to defray the costs of implementing TAP include current local district/school budgets, new state appropriations and ballot initiatives, private foundations, federal funds such as ESEA, and including Title II monies for teacher quality enhancement.

TAP has generated excitement and endorsements from both political and education leaders. Susan Tave Zelman, Ohio Superintendent of Public Instruction, praised TAP when she recently wrote: "What I like about the Teacher Advancement Program is that it embeds differentiated roles for teachers in the life of the school and rewards teachers who are making improvement with regard to student achievement. It seems to be creating a fair and credible way to evaluate teacher effectiveness." ■

For more information on the Teacher Advancement Program, visit www.tapschools.org.

Merit Pay Pitfalls

New study questions old assumptions

States and districts considering merit pay should take notice of a new study from some of the nation's top education economists. In their recently published study, *The Market for Teacher Quality*, researchers Eric Hanushek, John Kain, Daniel O'Brien, and Steve Rivkin provide sweeping findings on a whole range of teacher quality issues.

The researchers found, for example, that districts basing teacher bonuses on their schools' overall performance growth (and not the performance of individual teachers) end up overlooking—and therefore not rewarding—the true sources of student gains: the individual teachers within any given school who really pack a punch. In other words, the greatest variations in teacher performance are found among teachers within the same school building, not between schools district-wide.

They also found that school-wide bonus plans have all sorts of fairness and accuracy problems. Small schools end up looking like they are making more progress than they make, meaning a teacher is more statistically likely to get a bonus at a small school, regardless of true performance. And, because a good plan should be based on multi-year performance (no matter whether it is targeted at schools or individual teachers), the

performance of current teachers gets confused with that of their predecessors, making it more likely that the wrong schools are getting compensated and deflating teachers' incentive to improve.

The economists offer insight related to better structuring of merit pay (most school districts are getting it all wrong); the wisdom of matching teacher race with student race (seems to be a good idea); the teacher attributes that correlate with teacher effectiveness (practically none); the damage to educational progress inflicted by first-year teachers (more significant than anything else within a school's control); and, running smack up against previous studies, a finding that inner-city school districts are not bleeding their most talented teachers but are instead losing teachers who are about as effective as the ones who stay.

In announcing the study, The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) cautions that "some of the report's details could (in our opinion) lend support to somewhat different conclusions," and highlights it as recommended reading. ■

Source: *The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) TQ Bulletin*, a weekly e-mail newsletter. NCTQ website: www.nctq.org.

For report details, see: *The Market for Teacher Quality*, Eric A. Hanushek, John F. Kain, Daniel M. O'Brien, and Steven G. Rivkin, National Bureau of Economic Research, February 2005. Visit www.nctq.org/nctq/research/1112806467874.pdf



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Dis·in·gen·u·ous

(adj.) not straightforward: crafty

By Mike Antonucci

The National Education Association filed suit against the U.S. Department of Education, claiming the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is an unfunded federal mandate. One of the attorneys who filed the suit, and who is undoubtedly its primary author, is NEA General Counsel Robert H. Chanin.

Though the complaint makes many claims, it hinges on one phrase in the law that releases states and school districts from any obligation “to spend any funds or incur any costs not paid for under this Act.” The lawsuit claims that by failing to provide “sufficient federal funds” to pay for its provisions, “the Secretary of Education is violating the Spending Clause of the United States Constitution.”

The Department of Education attacked both ends of the union lawsuit by asserting that NCLB is neither a mandate nor insufficiently funded.

“The law says that you don’t have to do anything it requires unless you receive the federal money to do it,” Chanin told the *New York Times*. “There’s a promise in the law, and it is unambiguous.”

But the Education Intelligence Agency (EIA) has evidence of some considerable ambiguity in NEA’s own argument.

On May 7, 2003, the NEA Office of General Counsel sent a “confidential-attorney/client privileged” memo to a large group of state affiliate officers and employees. The memo concerned the NCLB provision regarding the notification of parents whose teachers did not meet the law’s definition of “highly qualified.”

As EIA reported in its December 8, 2003 *Communiqué*, Chanin advised the union not to pursue litigation on that issue, and the bulk of the memo provides NEA state affiliates advice about the best way to comply with the law. What makes the memo relevant to the NEA’s recent lawsuit is the reason Chanin cited for not pursuing litigation.

“There are two conceptual possibilities for a challenge based on federal law,” the 2003 memo reads. “One is that the parental notice requirement violates a right guaranteed by the First Amendment, denies equal protection, or runs afoul of some other provision in the United States Constitution. We find no such violation.”

Chanin continued:

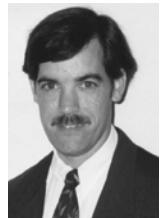
“The other basis for a possible federal law challenge is that there is no constitutional provision that gives Congress the authority *to impose* this type of requirement on states – and that might be an avenue worth exploring if that was what Congress has done. In point of fact, however, neither the parental notice requirement – nor, indeed, any of the other requirements in NCLB – are ‘imposed’ on the states in a legal sense. NCLB has been enacted on the basis of Congress’ Spending Power, and states can avoid this and other statutory requirements simply by declining to accept federal Title I funds. If the states decide to accept such funds, however, then they must also accept the

conditions that Congress has attached to them. To be sure, a legal argument can be made that this choice is not really ‘voluntary’ – states have no option but to comply inasmuch as they cannot adequately fund public education without the federal contribution – but the courts uniformly have rejected such an argument in the education context, as well as in connection with other federal aid programs.”

Chanin then helpfully goes on to cite seven cases to support this interpretation.

“In sum,” the memo says, “we see no way for a school district to avoid complying with the parental notice requirement,” but adds in a footnote, “except, of course, by rejecting NCLB funding. But the parental notice requirement hardly seems sufficient to trigger such drastic action.”

NEA President Reg Weaver recently told the media, “The principle of the law is simple; if you regulate, you have to pay.” But the memo and all those court cases illustrate the obvious fact that federal funds are a two-way obligation. If you want the federal bucks, you have to play by the federal rules. ■



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