

## January 2010 Advocacy Newsletter

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Information gathered by the Education, Environment, Health and Wellness, Parenting and Family Life, and Special Education Chairs and the Educator Vice President to assist you in your advocacy efforts.



### Education

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- Don't forget for all the latest on what is happening within the New York State Education Department, go to <http://www.nysed.gov/>
- **Statement by Education Commissioner David Steiner – An Agenda for Education Reform in NYS:** <http://www.oms.nysed.gov/press/AgendaforEducationReform.html>
- **Regents prepare to transform teacher preparation and recruit skilled teachers to high need schools:**  
<http://www.oms.nysed.gov/press/TeacherPreparationSkilledTeachers.html>
- **Expanded learning time may boost achievement** (Education Week 12/9)  
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/12/09/14time.h29.html?tkn=TSUCB6PaRa00Sp4sV6BMz5pmR%2BIWWmWRjuN3>  
Additional learning time during the school day may help improve student achievement at the middle- and high-school level, according to a National Center on Time & Learning analysis of a database of schools that have added instructional time. The analysis found improved test scores in some middle and high schools with expanded academic days, while achievement did not increase in grades 3 through 5. Researchers said the results offer an early picture of the value of extended programming, but more in-depth research is needed.
- **Research shows brain connections improving with reading practice** (National Public Radio 12/9; Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 12/10)  
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=121253104>  
Students who practice reading can strengthen their brains -- especially the white-matter connections essential to learning, according to research by scientists at the Center for Cognitive Brain Imaging at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. Researchers scanned students' brains, then enrolled struggling readers in an intensive reading program. Researchers again scanned students' brains, this time after 100 hours of reading practice, and found the training improved "not just their reading ability, but the tissues in their brain."
- **Plans set for National Certification of Principals** (Education Week – 12/09)  
[http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/12/10/15principals\\_ep.h29.html?tkn=ZZZFk4AH%2Bcg2wOX4uLNzyDJqj4I1r4T4c1f](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/12/10/15principals_ep.h29.html?tkn=ZZZFk4AH%2Bcg2wOX4uLNzyDJqj4I1r4T4c1f)  
The creation of a national certification for principals is under way and is being discussed, with plans to launch the initiative in 2011.
- **Studies Explore Secrets of Principals' Success** (Education Week 12/9/09)  
[http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/12/09/14principals\\_ep.h29.html?tkn=\[\[BFFe1fLt7Dpuo%2BeUvtOphbTbDio%2BjEH%2Fza](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/12/09/14principals_ep.h29.html?tkn=[[BFFe1fLt7Dpuo%2BeUvtOphbTbDio%2BjEH%2Fza)

A new set of working papers to be presented at a conference aims to promote a better understanding of the extent to which school leaders matter and why. One study found that the most effective principals appear to be adept at weeding out weak teachers and keeping strong ones. Another paper concludes that the skill of a principal is most important to schools serving large numbers of low-achieving students living in poverty. Some of the research analyzes the distribution of principals in lower- and higher-income schools.

- **Restructuring Schools Under NCLB Found to Lag** (Education Week – 12/09)  
[http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/12/09/15restructure\\_ep.h29.html?tkn=Y\[SF%2FpJQ1SV%2FP9iyG1N8roJjisqAnqtm7UxD](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/12/09/15restructure_ep.h29.html?tkn=Y[SF%2FpJQ1SV%2FP9iyG1N8roJjisqAnqtm7UxD)  
The Center on Education Policy says its report raises questions about the Education Department's strategies for turning around low-performing schools.
- **Majority of College Dropouts Cite Financial Struggles as Main Cause** (Washington Post, 12/9/09) <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/12/09/AR2009120903045.html>  
The number one reason many young adults drop out of college is an inability to juggle school, work and paying for basic expenses, according to a Public Agenda report. Of students surveyed, 58% said they did not receive financial help from their families to pay tuition or fees, and 69% had no financial aid. The report suggests ways to make it easier for working students to complete school, including allowing part-time students to receive financial aid, scheduling more classes at night and on weekends, reducing tuition and providing child care. (Washington Post, 12/09/09)



## Environment

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- **United Nations Climate Change Conference:** Read all about it here: <http://en.cop15.dk/>
- **Don't Mess With Mercury:** The U.S. EPA and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry have launched a new campaign to warn children about the dangers of playing with elemental mercury. To reach its intended audience, the video "Don't Mess with Mercury" is being announced on Twitter and posted to You Tube. Spilt elemental mercury can break into microscopic beads that are invisible to the eye but continue to release odorless toxic vapors. Attempts to vacuum or sweep a mercury spill can create approximately 10 times more hazardous mercury vapors than cleaning it properly. <http://mercurypolicy.org/?p=810>
- **The Story of Cap and Trade:** *The Story of Cap & Trade* is a fast-paced, fact-filled look at the leading climate solution being discussed at Copenhagen and on Capitol Hill. Host Annie Leonard introduces the energy traders and Wall Street financiers at the heart of this scheme and reveals the "devils in the details" in current cap and trade proposals: free permits to big polluters, fake offsets and distraction from what's really required to tackle the climate crisis. If you've heard about cap and trade, but aren't sure how it works (or who benefits), this is the film is for you. Watch it here: [www.storyofstuff.com/capandtrade/](http://www.storyofstuff.com/capandtrade/)
- **Sick Schools 2009:** Here's a really great flyer in pdf to print and distribute. [www.healthyschools.org/sickschools09\\_summaryflyer.pdf](http://www.healthyschools.org/sickschools09_summaryflyer.pdf)



## Health and Wellness

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- **CATCH** is a coordinated school health program that builds an alliance of parents, the school, and community all working together to teach children and families how to be healthy for a lifetime. CATCH offers programs in: Go For Health Classroom Curriculum; CATCH Physical Education; Eat Smart, School Nutrition Services; Home Team, Family Activities; After School Physical Activity and Nutrition. [www.catchinfo.org](http://www.catchinfo.org)
- **Car Safety Seats:** One of the most important jobs you have as a parent is keeping your child safe when riding in a vehicle. Each year thousands of young children are killed or injured in car crashes. Proper use of car safety seats helps keep children safe. But with so many different car safety seats on the market, it's no wonder many parents find this overwhelming. The type of seat your child needs depends on several things, including your child's size and the type of vehicle you have. To be sure your child is using the most appropriate seat, go to [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org) (click on car safety and under Features, click on Car Safety Seats: A Guide for Families 2009).



## Parenting and Family Life

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- **The Importance of pre-school:** In order for a child to succeed in their lives they need to have a wonderful start. In order for a child to be able to interact with other children, they need to experience the type of an environment where they are able to learn how to deal with and play with other children. Dealing with other children teaches a child how to have patience, be able to control their emotions, take direction and be able to listen. These lessons in social skills are critical in a child learning how to be a part of society and develop their own individual personalities. The advantages of pre-school, teaches a child how to learn academically. In learning songs and poetry they are able to know how to listen. When playing with blocks, they learn phonics and reading skills. Matching pictures, sequencing and building with sand and water teach them math concepts. Mostly in watching other children, your child will learn many beneficial lessons on playing and learning at an early age. The following websites will help in learning more on the importance of pre-school for your child. Sites to check out:

<http://www.parentingscience.com/preschool-social-skills.html>

<http://www.everythingpreschool.com/articles/guidance/social.htm>

<http://school.familyeducation.com/preschool/social-skills/42608.html>

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_2051095\\_teach-child-social-skills-preschool.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_2051095_teach-child-social-skills-preschool.html)

<http://www.abchomepreschool.com/PreschoolEducationBlog/category/preschool-social-skills/>



## Special Education

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- Please see the memo from Ira Schwartz regarding "**Anticipated Changes to 2009-10 School Year AYP Determinations for the Students with Disabilities Subgroup**" attached and found at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/memos/0910ayp.html>

Note that "NYSED will act to help offset the impact of the loss of the statistical adjustment described above by requesting that USED allow New York State to include in the Students with Disabilities group, for a period of up to two AYP determination cycles, the scores of students who were previously classified as students with disabilities but who no longer receive special education services. Currently, NYSED does not include students with disabilities who have been declassified when determining AYP for this accountability group. Upon approval of this request by USED, the Board of Regents will be asked to amend Section 100.2(p)(1)(i) of Commissioner's Regulations to apply this flexibility to the 2009–10 school years results."

- **Important Information on Restraint and Seclusion:** On Wednesday, December 9, The Preventing Harmful Restraint and Seclusion in Schools Act, HR 4247, was introduced by Representative George Miller (D-CA), Chair of the Education and Labor Committee, and Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA). Text of HR 4247 can be found at: [http://edlabor.house.gov/documents/111/pdf/legislation/HR4247Seclusion\\_Restraint.pdf](http://edlabor.house.gov/documents/111/pdf/legislation/HR4247Seclusion_Restraint.pdf)

Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT), Chair of the Subcommittee on Children and Families of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, introduced companion legislation in the Senate on the same day. Text of S 2860 can be found at: <http://www.thomas.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c111:S.2860>.

Although there are minor differences, both bills would prevent and reduce harmful restraint and seclusion in schools. The Obama Administration has made clear its strong support for this legislation.

Two recent reports by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09719t.pdf> and the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) <http://www.ndrn.org/sr/SR-Report.pdf> detailed instances of restraint and seclusion that were harmful and even resulted in deaths of children. During a press conference to introduce the legislation in the House, Representatives Miller and McMorris Rodgers introduced parents from Michigan who said that their child, who has autism and a speech delay, had been tied to a chair for up to three hours every day when he attended preschool as a three-year old. He could not tell his parents what was happening to him every day. His mother only found out when she visited the school for a holiday party. DPC staff attended the press conference.