

The Opening Bell

Today's News for the National Education Association from Newspapers, TV, Radio and the Journals

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Customized Briefing for ELVIRA TIPPINS-RUSSELL

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Editor's Note

In observance of Labor Day the briefing will not be published on Monday, September 5. We will resume publication Tuesday, September 6. We wish our readers a happy and safe holiday.

Leading the News

Educators Consider How To Teach September 11 To New Generation.

[USA Today](#) (9/2, Toppo) reports that on the eve of the September 11 attacks, "educators at all levels are grappling with endless variations of this problem: How do you teach something that everybody knows about but few understand? And how do you give kids the benefit of 10 years of perspective when the results of that day -- two long-standing wars and increased security worldwide -- are still playing out?" Although "most adults have vivid memories of the events of 9/11, an estimated one in five Americans either have no memory of them or weren't born yet."

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Traditional history instruction doesn't work. "Why Won't You Just Tell Us the Answer?" shows teachers how to move beyond just lectures and textbooks toward a more question-centered approach that fosters historical thinking and leaves a lasting impact. Includes 6 sample American history units. [Preview the entire book online!](#)

In the Classroom

Students Finding Greater Flexibility Within School Dress Codes.

The [New York Times](#) (9/2, B1, Clifford, Subscription Publication) reports that "in the great tradition of teenagers challenging authority, students at schools that require uniforms have been bending the rules a bit, showing up to class in cargo shorts,

leggings and yoga pants." Rather than cracking down on this trend, "some schools are not only looking the other way at the modifications, but explicitly allowing the fashion-forward items." Beverly J. Hutton, principal of educational services for Burlington County Institute of Technology, said, "We just ask them to stay within the color scheme and to abide by the code as far as modesty." Dr. Hutton added, "They're teenagers. If you take it all away, you get rebellion." Other schools have sought greater "student buy-in" by allowing them input into the selection of uniforms.

Single-Gender Classrooms A Growing Trend.

The [Washington Times](#) (9/2, Wolfgang) reports that "single-gender classrooms within coed schools have exploded in number over the past decade, rising from about 50 in 2003 to more than 400 this year," with South Carolina having the greatest number, "more than 100 districts offering all-boy and all-girl classes." And, "schools that have successfully implemented same-sex classes often report more attentive students and fewer disruptions as well as a more lively back-and-forth between teachers and their students."

Students Learn About Sewing, History Through Quilt Project.

The [Anchorage Daily News](#) (9/2, Landis) reports, "Students from Linnaea Troina's fifth/sixth grade Point Higgins Elementary school class presented about 20 lap quilts to residents of Ketchikan Pioneer's Home and Ketchikan General Hospital long-term care." The quilts were presented "in the Pioneer's Home dining area after an ice cream social with the students." The project was made possible through donations from Walmart and Rainy Day Quilters. "In addition to teaching her students about the craft of quilting, Troina taught them about the role that quilts played in the southern United States during the Civil War."

Louisiana High School To Offer Process Technology Training Program.

The [New Orleans Times-Picayune](#) (9/2, Waller) reports that "education, industry and economic development officials have collaborated to create the most extensive high school process technology training program in the New Orleans area, which just opened on the campus of L.B. Landry High School in Algiers." Around "30 Landry students are taking the classes this year, earning high school credit alongside college credit from Nunez Community College in Chalmette, giving them a head start toward earning a process technology associate's degree after they graduate from high school." Radford Bustin, "the supervisor of operations training at the ConocoPhillips Alliance oil refinery in Belle Chasse," said, "Process technology is a place where you can make a career. And that's what we're here for. The equipment and science it takes to run a process plant requires process technicians."

Virginia District Extends School Day, Moves High Schools To Block Scheduling.

The [Newport News \(VA\) Daily Press](#) (9/2, Williams) reports all schools in the York County School Division "will have a longer day" this year, "while three high schools will use a new block schedule format." The day extensions differ by grade level, with "10 additional minutes at elementary schools, 12 minutes at middle schools and 18 minutes at high schools." The additional time will be used for instruction, according to the Daily Press. Magruder Elementary School Principal Michael Lombardo said the additional time "gives us an opportunity to really enhance and go a little further to provide our students with rigorous and truly engaging instructional activities."

On the Job

Study Finds Utah Teachers' Salaries Competitive With Neighboring States.

The [Deseret Morning News \(UT\)](#) (9/2, Farmer) reports, "Utah's teachers earn comparable salaries to teachers in other Mountain States, despite national data that ranks Utah 49th in the nation for average teacher salary." A report from the Utah Foundation using National Center for Education Statistics data found that, "when age and experience are taken into account, Utah usually ranked in the middle of the pack for teacher salaries among neighboring states." The article explains, "The

reason for the disparity between the national ranking and Utah Foundation's report is that Utah's workforce demographics trend very young," putting them at the lower end of the pay scale and bringing down the average.

Atlanta May End Bonus Pay Program Amid Cheating Allegations, Budget Crunch.

The [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#) (9/2, Sarrio) reports, "Atlanta Public Schools may ditch its incentive pay program in an effort to trim the district's spending and following concerns of widespread test cheating since the program's creation." Superintendent Erroll Davis said cutting the program "could save about \$1.3 million," and argued it "flawed given the admission of widespread test cheating in a state investigation of Atlanta Public Schools." David said, "While people may have theoretically earned this, I don't know about the efficacy of the data and the quality of the data."

Law & Policy

Presidential Jobs Proposal May Contain Education Funding.

[Education Week](#) (9/2, Wolfe) reports, "President Obama plans to unveil an ambitious jobs proposal on Sept. 8 in an address to Congress - a measure that may contain billions of dollars in school renovation and construction funding. Education analysts also believe that the proposal is likely to contain education jobs funding to sustain and create teacher and administrator positions." Few details are available – although the proposal is not expected to be a "Stimulus II," because of the difficulty such a plan would have getting through Congress – but some predict that the proposal will "draw inspiration" from the Local Jobs for America Act introduced by Rep. George Miller (R-CA) last week. The bill would "invest in local communities over two years to postpone planned cuts or to hire back workers for local services who have been laid-off because of tight budgets."

South Dakota Supreme Court Upholds Constitutionality Of School Funding System.

The [AP](#) (9/2, Brokaw) reports, "The South Dakota Supreme Court on Thursday upheld the constitutionality of the state's system for funding school districts, rejecting the schools' arguments that the current arrangement does not provide enough money to assure students of an adequate education. In a unanimous ruling, the high court said a lawsuit supported by about two-thirds of the state's school districts raises serious questions about the funding system and shows that some districts struggle to provide adequate facilities and qualified teachers." Justice Judith Meierhenry wrote, "Even so, reasonable doubt exists that the statutory funding mechanisms or level of funding are unconstitutional."

According to [KELO-TV](#) Sioux Falls, SD (9/1, Dunsmoor), "The decision ends a five year lawsuit against the state, but the opinion also is sending some mixed messages to lawmakers." State Senator Mark Johnston (R) said the ruling "affirms that we are adequately funding education," while Representative Marc Feinstein (D) "says the Supreme Court opinion only looked at the formula in the years leading up to the lawsuit, and didn't include the last two years when lawmakers didn't follow the formula." Feinstein argues "lawmakers need to get back to the funding formula, or they'll open themselves up for a second lawsuit that they could lose."

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Safety & Security

New Jersey Anti-Bullying Law Takes Effect.

In the "Learning Network" blog in the [New York Times](#) (9/2), Shannon Doyne writes that "today, the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights becomes law in the state of New Jersey," and notes aspects of the new law, including that "each school must designate an antibullying specialist to investigate complaints," and that "the law also requires districts to appoint a safety team at each school, made up of teachers, staff members and parents, to review complaints." Principals must "begin an investigation within one school day of a bullying episode, and superintendents to provide reports to Trenton twice a year detailing all episodes."

West Virginia District Adds School Bus Safety Measures.

The [AP](#) (9/2, Marra) reports in West Virginia, officials have installed cameras "on about 85 percent of Kanawha County's 153-bus fleet," and have also focused on bus driver training. Drivers "must first obtain commercial driver's licenses and a school bus endorsement," and then complete "40 hours of classroom training and spend 12 hours training behind the wheel." Also they must be CPR and first aid certified and also undergo "a background check and drug screening." Additionally, "the county also is considering a student tracking system," which "would entail every student being issued an identification badge with sensors to record when they boarded and disembarked."

Facilities

New Maine School Qualifies For LEED Certification, Comes In Almost \$6M Under Budget.

The [Bangor Daily News](#) (9/2, Koenig) reports, "The ceremonial grand opening of Portland's Ocean Avenue Elementary School was punctuated by superlatives Thursday evening as the facility was lauded for its creative aesthetics and energy efficiency." The new school, which features "wavy, towering plantlike structures on the pathway leading toward the school's front doors" that one official described as "Dr. Seuss-like," came in almost \$6 million under budget, "thanks in large part to the efforts of" the contractor and architecture firm behind it. It also "qualifies for LEED certification," with features like a vegetated roof and pavement made from recycled materials.

School Finance

Bland County, Virginia, Rejects \$11.6M Loan For New School.

The [Bluefield \(WV\) Daily Telegraph](#) (9/1, Archer) reported from Bland, Virginia, "After months of examining the figures to see if an \$11.6 million low interest loan would enable the county to consolidate the county schools into one modern K-12 facility, the Bland County board of supervisors and school board jointly decided that the project 'is not financially in the best interest of the county at the present time,' according to a joint press release." Bland County Administrator Eric Workman said, "The county would have cost the county \$1.8 million per year in debt service. ... In order to service that debt, Bland County citizens would have a 62 percent increase in their property tax. Both boards did not feel that was in the best interest of the people."

Also in the News

Report Finds Critical Parental Involvement Takes Place At Home.

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[Education Week](#) (9/2, Offutt) reports, "Research finds that the most powerful parent involvement" is often "found at home when parents help with homework, express high expectations, and guide children toward goals." A new

report from the National School Boards Association's Center for Public Education "emphasizes that the greatest impact from parent involvement comes when parents reinforce high-quality classroom instruction through family-focused, home-based learning." It also found that "parent involvement isn't driven by income." CPE Director Patte Barth offered some "ways to select parent involvement strategies that focus on improving student achievement," which the article details.

Texas District Changes Placement Of Cafeteria Foods, Sees Increased Healthy Eating.

The [Austin American Statesman](#) (9/2, Heinauer) reports that Austin, TX schools are changing lunch lines "so student offerings begin with milk , followed by fruits, vegetables -- first cold then hot -- and then the main entrée." The changes are based on "a New York Times opinion piece about how to make healthier options more marketable by switching things up in the lunch line." So far, the district has found "students were consuming 15 percent more fruit and 10 percent more fresh salad and vegetable dippers," and "hot vegetable consumption went up about 3 percent." Meanwhile, chocolate milk sales "dropped from 200 to 170 units."

Thursday's Lead Stories

- [California Schools Make Headway, But Sanction Concerns Remain.](#)
- [Some Districts Experimenting With Four-Day School Weeks.](#)
- [West Virginia Looks Past Testing In Bid To Improve Schools.](#)
- [Duncan Praises Pittsburg Schools For Teacher Effectiveness, Student Achievement Efforts.](#)
- [ED Allowing Districts More Leeway With Special Ed Spending Reductions.](#)
- [Police, School Officials Add Security Measures To Detroit Schools.](#)
- [Minnesota Schools Increasing Technology In The Classroom.](#)