

THE ADVOCATE

New NSBA President Shares Her Vision

E. Jane Gallucci began her term as president of the National School Boards Association (NSBA) during the association's annual conference in Chicago on April 11, 2006. She has been a member of NSBA's board of directors since 2001 and served as president-elect last year. Gallucci has served on the Pinellas County Board of Education for 10 years and formerly served as a school board member in Rockaway, N.J. She has also been president of the Florida School Boards Association and served in various leadership posts for the association.

In her speech during the Fourth General Session, Gallucci said she wants to counter the negative images and lies about public education spread by politicians and the media with the "true picture about what is really going on in our public schools." Her focus during her presidency at the national level is to focus on "snapshots of success" to share success stories in education with the public.

"Who is painting our picture of public education? Who creates our images? Is it us – those who know the most about what is going on in our schools? No, it is the media. The "Oprah Winfrey Show" is running a special report on what she calls 'a state of emergency' in our high schools. She will tell millions of viewers that 'most Americans have no idea how bad things really are,'" Gallucci said.

In an April 11-12, 2006 report, the "Oprah Winfrey Show" focused on high schools across the country.

"I know we are having problems in our schools, serious problems," Gallucci acknowledged, but she said the way to generate public support is not to ignore the successes of public education while advocating for improvements.

Gallucci called on school board members to send Oprah an e-mail (www2.oprah.com/email/tows/email_tows_main.jhtml) with facts about public education.

"Let's show Oprah the real picture of our high schools. Send her just one success story from one of your high schools to balance the negative spin," Gallucci urged.

She offered some facts about public education today that don't get much media attention: Americans are becoming more educated. More students are attending college. More young children are attending full-day kindergarten. High school students are taking more challenging courses. More students with disabilities are in regular classrooms. Student achievement is up in math. Younger students are showing gains in reading. SAT scores are up, even though more students are taking the exam. Teachers are better educated than ever. Schools are safer than ever.

This is the kind of information that will be collected on the new website for NSBA's Center for Public Education (www.centerforpubliceducation.org). This Center "makes it easier to have one message and one voice," Gallucci said.



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● Source: School Board News, April 2006

DIRECTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

By Joe Mack Mitchell

I am currently working on the NMSBA budget and doing this year's staff evaluations for the Board of Directors at the June meeting. These are a couple of tasks about which I have not talked in this newsletter. Both of these issues are worthy of sharing with the membership, but I have not done so for whatever reason. Lets talk about the setup of the staff in the office. I think it is important for our members to know who is performing what tasks.

The Association has three employees in the office in Santa Fe. The three are the Executive Director, the Finance Director and the Program Director. So what do each of us do to serve the membership? This list is not exhaustive, due to lack of space.



Carolyn Mole is the Finance Director. She has the task of making sure all the business of the Association is handled properly. For example, she will send out the invoices to the districts; manages the money when the invoices are paid; pays the Association's bills; serves as the payroll clerk; does the ordering and buying; serves as the liaison to the hotels and convention service businesses for conventions; deals with other businessmen who want

to exhibit or sponsor an event at the convention; does the School Board Member Directory; and she works with the auditor at tax time.

Elizabeth Egelhoff is the Program Director. She is responsible for all of the programs of the Association, such as: helping to facilitate statewide programs and conferences; assists with the Student Achievement Awards; coordinates the Spring & Fall region meetings; serves as staff support for me and the Association's two boards; tracks and reports board member training hours; serves as Editor of the ADVOCATE and the LINK; serves as the Association's webmaster and online learning administrator; and is the legislative assistant during legislative sessions.

I, as the Executive Director, also do a variety of fun things: I attend meetings that need a representative from the school boards such as LESC and PEC. However, more and more of these meetings are attended by members of the Association who are serving on your Board of Directors; do the program for all your conferences, except the Law Conference which is done by the attorneys from the Cuddy Law Firm; spend a part of the day talking to superintendents concerning board issues; talking to board members about superintendents and district issues; lobby the legislature for thirty or sixty days each year. When the legislature is working, not much else happens in my office; go to all the region meetings (spring and fall) unless there is a problem; do individual board workshops; supervise the staff (which need very little); and monitor all of the programs and business of the Association.

Now, what about the budget? The budget is going to be larger for 2006-07 because of two items. First of all, the Policy Service is picking up speed. We now have 24 districts contracted for the service. We will be able to add another district in September, 2006. We hope that there are districts out there waiting for a slot. The other reason is the Celebrating Educational Opportunities for Hispanic Student Conference that will be coming to New Mexico in March. It will raise about \$115,000, but will cost about \$85,000 to put on. These two items will force out budget revenue up over \$600,000. This is more than it has ever been before, but most of the increase comes from the two items mentioned above. We are finding that the costs of doing business have increased greatly, and we must continue to find other methods of raising revenue instead of raising dues and conference fees. I hope the information I have given you has not been boring and put you to sleep.

THE ADVOCATE

The mission of *The Advocate* is to provide information to the members of the New Mexico School Boards Association.

Articles published in *The Advocate* represent the ideas or beliefs of the respective writers and are not necessarily the views of the NMSBA unless otherwise noted.

The Advocate is the official publication of the NMSBA and is published quarterly. *The Advocate* is supported by membership dues and is sent to all school board members and superintendents of its member districts as well as education stakeholders. Non-profit postage paid in Santa Fe, NM.

Letters to the Editor are welcome. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit article submissions for clarity and length. Deadlines falling on a holiday or weekend will be extended to the next business day. The deadline for submissions is 4 PM:

Winter Issue - December 10th
Spring Issue - March 10th
Summer Issue - June 10th
Fall Issue - September 10th

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PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

By Lilliemae G Ortiz

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The school year is over and we find ourselves once again watching our students move on to the next level in our public schools. Some of the lucky ones we watch cross the stage at graduation and move on to a new stage in their lives. I love this time of year, it's one of my favorites, as we join our students to celebrate their accomplishments and achievements. As board members, we get to do this at the many year-end activities. It's always gratifying to see each of our student's accomplishments at the various award ceremonies; i.e., academic awards, national honor society induction, athletic awards, etc., to name a few.

Along with the acknowledgements at year-end, our particular school board (Pojoaque) likes to also acknowledge our students throughout the school year through the use of "PAT" Awards, Performance Achievement Tribute. Since 1997, our board has been handing out PAT Awards to students of the district to recognize their noteworthy accomplishments and/or achievements and to basically give them a "Pat on the Back" for their efforts. Nothing can be more important than immediate acknowledgement of our students and their varied successes!

The PAT Awards are presented at the board meeting to students although in the past we have awarded the PAT Awards to parents, teachers, staff and other community members. Parents are invited to attend the board meeting with their student. As each student is called up to receive their award, they have an opportunity to introduce their parents and family members, as well as share a little about the accomplishment that distinguishes them at that particular time. This is a great way to showcase our students, especially since the media is at board meetings and they too can see the good things that our students are doing.

Since the inception of this program, which is in place as a result of a policy, we have awarded hundreds of PAT Awards to our students. The board believes it is board time well spent. And it's also a great way to introduce the community to the work of the school board because on PAT Award nights, our community board room is always packed with standing room only and parents have an opportunity to witness other good works the board is doing. Showcase your students, it is a great idea and they are who we're all about!



The Last Word

Teacher Appreciation Week was in May, but this was too good not to print.

At a dinner party the guests were sitting around the table discussing issues of the day. One man, a CEO, decided to explain the problem with education. He argued, "What's a kid going to learn from someone who decided his best option in life was to become a teacher?" He reminded the other dinner guests what they say, "Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach." To stress his point he said to another guest, "You're a teacher, Susan, Be honest. What do you make?"

Susan, who had a reputation for honesty and frankness, replied, "You want to know what I make? I make kids work harder than they ever thought they could. I make a C+ student feel like the winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor. I make kids sit through 40 minutes of study hall in absolute silence. I make kids wonder. I make them question. I make them apologize and mean it. I make them write. I make them read, read, read. I make them show all their work in math and perfect their final drafts in English. I make them understand if they have the brains, and follow their heart, and if anyone tries to judge them by what they make, they must pay no attention because that person just didn't learn." Susan paused, then continued, "You want to know what I make? I make a difference. What do you make?"

♦ *Source: Kentucky School Advocate, March 2006 – a publication of the Kentucky School Boards Association*

Financial Literacy Becoming A Reality

As reported in the article "Schools Take on Financial Literacy" from the Summer 2004 issue of *The Advocate*, with the increase in bankruptcy filing, an increase of 105% in the last 15 years, in addition to the disturbing statistic that more people file for bankruptcy than graduate from college has led many states to begin adding financial literacy curricula to state standards. The U.S. Department of Treasury, the American Bankers Association and banking corporations have begun teaming up to bring financial education lessons to K-12 classrooms across the country.

Wisconsin has finished developing performance standards for students and a copy of the "Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for Personal Financial Literacy" is available for pdf download at <http://dpi.wisconsin.gov/cal/pdf/perffinlitstd.pdf>. Texas, South Carolina, and Virginia are passing laws mandating economics and financial literacy be taught at the middle and high school levels. Additionally, the Maryland State Department of Education is working to develop lessons covering such topics as health insurance, retirement planning, and credit card management.

● Source: NSBA Board Buzz Weblog

Rate Increases for Fuel and Postage Expected

According to the *Kiplinger Letter*, projections are that gas prices will top \$3 per gallon for gasoline by Memorial Day and then ease as the summer goes along with prices dropping to \$2.70 by October. Diesel fuel is projected to reach \$3.50 this summer and then ease back to \$3 per gallon by October. New federal regulations call for at least 80% of diesel fuel to be ultralow sulfur by October. This fuel is more expensive to produce and shortages can be expected in many parts of the country.

Natural gas prices are not expected to see any relief. It is projected that the price per million BTU will be \$7.50 in June and reach \$11 in January.

On January 1, 2007 first class stamps will jump to \$0.42, then to \$0.44 in January 2008.

● Source: William F. Lynch, Associated School Boards of South Dakota, Chief Financial Officer

CELEBRATING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR HISPANIC STUDENTS

MARCH 23-25, 2007

**HOTEL ALBUQUERQUE AT OLD TOWN
800 RIO GRANDE BLVD, NW
ALBUQUERQUE, NM**

SAVE THE DATE!

The 16th annual conference will feature programs and strategies that have increased educational opportunities for Hispanic/Latino students, the fastest growing segment of our student population in the Southwest.

CALL FOR MODEL PROGRAM SUBMISSIONS

The Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas school boards associations are seeking model programs to share at the conference. Submissions should be made in one of the following categories: Community/Parent Involvement; Language and Achievement; Use of Technology; and Data-Driven Analysis and Accountability. The Model Program is available via pdf at www.nmsba.org under "conference information" on the homepage. Deadline for Model Program submissions is November 6, 2006.

CALL FOR STUDENT PANELISTS

During CEOHS, there will be a Student Panel presentation with one student from each of the four participating states. During the panel discussion each student will share their educational goals, successes and some obstacles they have overcome. Contact your state association to find out more about nominating a student from your district to represent your state!

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NMSBA NEWS

Call for Topics & Talent

NMSBA Annual Convention will be held **December 1-2, 2006 at the Marriott Hotel**, Albuquerque, NM. The Convention offers a variety of programs to help school board members become more efficient in their leadership roles. NMSBA is accepting topic suggestions from Board members on topics you need more information on to become more effective school leaders. Also, those members who want to give presentations toward their Master Board Member Certification should also submit topic ideas and let us know they are MBM candidates. We are open to suggestions for student talent as well. You can e-mail Mack Mitchell, Executive Director at nmsba1@nm.net. Be sure to include your name, district, and a daytime contact number.

Training Year to Close August 31

State mandated school board member training is tracked from **September 1 – August 31** each year. Board members are **required to have 5 hours of approved training** per year. NMSBA tracks school board member training and sends quarterly reports to Superintendents. Final 05-06 reports will be sent to Superintendents the first week in September. Any changes or corrections will be made before submitting the information to the Public Education Department's Office of Accountability for publication in the School District's Fall Report Cards. If you have questions or concerns regarding training, please contact the NMSBA office.

Online Learning Center's New Environment

From **May 15 - July 15** the NMSBA Online Learning Center (OLC) will be unavailable to new students. The National School Boards Association is facilitating a move from the program Blackboard to Avatar in order to improve service and end some reoccurring technical difficulties. NSBA is handling the entire transfer process and upon completion, the New Mexico OLC will be updated and restored to the webpage. Hopefully, the change will improve each student's overall online learning experience.

Boardbook Offers Districts Paperless Meetings

This tutorial link is available from the NMSBA homepage at www.nmsba.org. BoardBook is an electronic means to have Paperless Board Meetings and is now being offered through a partnership between NMSBA and Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) to New Mexico school districts. Some NMSBA districts that are using Board Book in their Paperless Board Meetings include Albuquerque, Gallup and Roswell. Please call Elizabeth at NMSBA for more information or to register for a demonstration.

Subscription Policy Service Available

NMSBA now offers districts the option of a Subscription Policy Service. This service offers policy development by a consultant/lawyer and provides up-to-date Policy Service Advisories. For further information or clarification, contact Mack Mitchell, Executive Director of NMSBA via e-mail at nmsba1@nm.net or by phone at (505) 983-5041. Some districts that have signed up for this feature include Aztec, Cloudcroft, Espanola, Lovington and Mosquero. The subscription service is different from the NMSBA Policy Bank.

NMSBA REGIONS & 2006 FALL MEETINGS

Region I

Wednesday, Oct. 4 in Central

Aztec, Bloomfield, Central, Dulce,
Farmington, Gallup, Zuni

Region II

Thursday, Sept. 14 in Santa Fe

Chama Valley, Espanola, Jemez Mountain,
Los Alamos, Mesa Vista, Pecos, Penasco,
Pojoaque Valley, Questa, Santa Fe, Taos

Region III

Monday, Oct. 16 in Santa Rosa

Cimarron, Clayton, Des Moines, Las
Vegas City, Las Vegas West, Maxwell,
Mora, Mosquero, Raton, Roy, Santa Rosa,
Springer, Wagon Mound

Region IV

Wednesday, Oct. 11 in Vaughn

Albuquerque, Belen, Bernalillo, Grants-
Cibola, Cuba, Estancia, Jemez Valley, Los
Lunas, Magdalena, Moriarty, Mountainair,
Quemado, Rio Rancho, Socorro, Vaughn

Region V

Tuesday, Sept. 19 in Clovis

Clovis, Dora, Elida, Floyd, Fort Sumner,
Grady, House, Logan, Melrose, Portales,
San Jon, Texico, Tucumcari

Region VI

Monday, Sept. 25 in Roswell

Artesia, Carlsbad, Dexter, Eunice,
Hagerman, Hobbs, Jal, Lake Arthur,
Loving, Lovington, Roswell, Tatum

Region VII

Tuesday, Oct. 24 in Las Cruces

Alamogordo, Capitan, Carrizozo,
Cloudcroft, Corona, Gadsden, Hatch
Valley, Hondo Valley, Las Cruces,
Ruidoso, T or C, Tularosa

Region VIII

Wednesday, Nov. 1 in Cobre

Animas, Cobre, Deming, Lordsburg,
Reserve, Silver City

Have You Seen the New Food Pyramid?

Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns unveiled MyPyramid, a new symbol and interactive food guidance system. “Steps to a Healthier You,” MyPyramid’s central message, supports President Bush’s Healthier US initiative which is designed to help Americans live longer, better and healthier lives. MyPyramid, which replaces the Food Guide Pyramid introduced in 1992, is part of an overall food guidance system that emphasizes the need for a more individualized approach to improving diet and lifestyle. “MyPyramid is about the ability of Americans to personalize their approach when choosing a healthier lifestyle that balances nutrition and exercise,” said Johanns. “Many Americans can dramatically improve their overall health by making modest improvements to their diets and by incorporating regular physical activity into their daily lives.” MyPyramid incorporates recommendations from the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, which was released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* provide authoritative advice for people two years of age and older about how proper dietary habits can promote health and reduce the risk of major chronic diseases. MyPyramid was developed to carry the messages of the dietary guidelines and to make Americans aware of the vital health benefits of simple and modest improvements in nutrition, physical activity and lifestyle behavior. The MyPyramid symbol, which is deliberately simple, is meant to encourage consumers to make healthier food choices and to be active every day. Consumers can get more in-depth information from the new Web site, MyPyramid.gov, so that they can make these choices to fit their own needs. The MyPyramid symbol represents the recommended proportion of foods from each food group and focuses on the importance of making smart food choices in every food group, every day. Physical activity is a new element in the symbol.

MyPyramid illustrates: ·

Personalization, demonstrated by the MyPyramid Web site. To find a personalized recommendation of the kinds and amounts of food to eat each day, go to MyPyramid.gov. ·

Gradual improvement, encouraged by the slogan, “Steps to a Healthier You.” It suggests that individuals can benefit from taking small steps to improve their diet and lifestyle each day. ·

Physical activity, represented by the steps and the person climbing them, as a reminder of the importance of daily physical activity. ·

Variety, symbolized by the six color bands representing the five food groups of MyPyramid and oils. Foods from all groups are needed each day for good health. ·

Moderation, represented by the narrowing of each food group from bottom to top. The wider base stands for foods with little or no solid fats, added sugars, or caloric sweeteners. These should be selected more often to get the most nutrition from calories consumed.

Proportionality, shown by the different widths of the food group bands. The widths suggest how much food a person should choose from each group. The widths are just a general guide, not exact proportions. Check MyPyramid.gov for the amount that is right for you. The new food guidance system utilizes interactive technology found on MyPyramid.gov. MyPyramid contains interactive activities that make it easy for individuals to key in their age, gender and physical activity level so that they can get a more personalized recommendation on their daily calorie level based on the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. It also allows individuals to find general food guidance and suggestions for making smart choices from each food group.

MyPyramid.gov features: ·

MyPyramid Plan – provides a quick estimate of what and how much food you should eat from the different food groups by entering your age, gender and activity level. ·

MyPyramid Tracker – provides more detailed information on your diet quality and physical activity status by comparing a day’s worth of foods eaten with current nutrition guidance. Relevant nutrition and physical activity messages are tailored to your desire to maintain your current weight or to lose weight. ·

Inside MyPyramid – provides in-depth information for every food group, including recommended daily amounts in commonly used measures, like cups and ounces, with examples and everyday tips. The section also includes recommendations for choosing healthy oils, discretionary calories and physical activity. ·

Start Today – provides tips and resources that include downloadable suggestions on all the food groups and physical activity, and a worksheet to track what you are eating.

Future enhancements to MyPyramid.gov will include features that make it possible for consumers to make specific food choices by group, look at everyday portions of favorite foods and adjust their choices to meet their daily needs. A child-friendly version of MyPyramid for teachers and children is being developed. This version of MyPyramid is intended to reach children 6 to 11 years old with targeted messages about the importance of making smart eating and physical activity choices.

Additional information about USDA’s MyPyramid is available at MyPyramid.gov. The *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and consumer brochure are available at www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines. ·



No States Achieve Highly Qualified Goal

Not a single state will have a highly qualified teacher in every core class this school year as promised by President Bush's education law. The Department of Education on Friday ordered every state to explain how it will have 100 percent of its core teachers qualified — belatedly — in the 2006-07 school year. Department officials would not say how much aid could be withheld from states to force compliance. But Johnson said, "In some cases, we're talking about large amounts of money." States often fell short because they did not report accurate or complete data about the quality of the teacher corps, said Rene Islas, who oversees the department's review.

The 4-year-old No Child Left Behind law says teachers must have a bachelor's degree, a state license and proven competency in every subject they teach by this year. The first federal order of its kind, it applies to teachers of math, history and any other core class. In grading the states, the department found that 29 have made substantial progress. They must improve, but they do not face looming sanctions.

No matter which category they are in, all the states must submit a new plan of action. Most states give themselves good grades on teacher quality; 33 states say 90 percent to 99 percent of their classes are taught by highly qualified teachers. Most of the rest put their numbers a tier below, in a range of 70 percent to 89 percent.

What the agency wants to see most, Johnson said, is what states are doing to get experienced teachers into classrooms with large numbers of poor and minority children. That no state complied with the law on time — four years after Bush signed it with great fanfare — is due in part to the enormity of the challenge.

Some teachers, particularly in small or rural areas, handle many subjects and have not met the law's details in each one. Many schools struggle just to find teachers in math, science or special education. And turnover is common, often blamed on salary and stress. Although the federal term is "highly qualified," the definition is widely regarded as more of a minimum qualification, because it requires teachers to know what they teach. Phyllis McClure, who supports the law and tracks it for the Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights, said the department is right to demand accurate data and results from the states.

● Source: *The Associated Press, 2006*

U.S. Dept. of Ed. Creates Center for Rural Education

The U.S. Department of Education (DOE) has created the Center for Rural Education and named former U.S. Commissioner of Education William L. Smith as its director. Nearly 42 percent of the nation's public schools are in rural communities or small towns. The center will host a series of focus groups and forums to highlight issues facing rural education. For more information, go to www.ed.gov/nclb/freedom/local/rural/index.html

PED and HED Want Improved College Readiness

The New Mexico Public Education Department and the Higher Education Department held a press conference in conjunction with the Office of Education Accountability when they released a report to the public entitled, "*Ready for College: a Report on New Mexico High School Graduates Who Need Remedial Classes in Higher Education.*"

The purpose of the study was to gather detailed information about how many New Mexico high school graduates take remedial courses in colleges and universities. The study included 35,654 students who graduated from New Mexico's public high schools and attended New Mexico colleges in the years 2000-2004. The report states that almost half (49%) of New Mexico public high school graduates took college remedial courses to bolster math and reading skills. The data in the report provides a baseline for measuring the results of education reform efforts in the future. Key findings from the report especially highlight the need for more math courses in high school and more professional development for those high school teachers who teach math.

"This report underscores the point that many of New Mexico's high school graduates are unprepared for higher education," said Secretary of Education, Dr. Veronica C. Garcia. "An over-all rate of 49% of high school graduates not ready for college must change. I am committed to working with Secretary McClure and our 89 school districts to raise the rigor of the courses our students are taking to ensure that *all* of our students are ready for college and entering a high-wage workforce."

Secretary Garcia and I are making seamless education a reality. When a recent high school graduate must take remedial courses to be college-ready, it costs the student extra time and money and is an extra step that needs to be eliminated," said Higher Education Secretary Dr. Beverlee J. McClure. "We can't just spend money on programs and bureaucracy. We asked for this report to know exactly where to target our energy and to make bold changes to prepare students for college and for the workforce. It is only by working together and by making data-driven decisions, that we can ensure all New Mexicans a quality education, regardless of ethnicity, regardless of whether they are urban or rural."

The report is available to the public at the Public Education Department website, www.ped.state.nm.us and at the Higher Education website, www.hed.state.nm.us. For more information call Beverly Friedman, NM PED Public Information Office at 1-505-827-6661 or 1-505-795-0180 (cell) or Laura Mulry, NM HED Public Information Office at 1-505-476-6542 or 1-505-490-3259 (cell).

● Source: *NM PED, April 2006*

Census Says Nearly Half of Young Children are Minorities

In a sign of major demographic shifts to come in the U.S., the Census Bureau reported that 45 percent of all children under age 5 are minorities. Most of that trend is driven by Hispanics, who are the nation's fastest-growing minority group and accounted for half of the total population growth.

Those statistics have a lot of potential implications for society, including the "achievement gap" in higher education. Federal statistics show that Hispanics and African Americans are less likely than whites to complete college.

Public Agenda research has found that the problem isn't motivation or encouragement. Our "Great Expectations" survey found that Hispanic and African American parents are actually more likely to emphasize the value of higher education than whites.

And in our "Life After High School" survey, we found young adults overwhelmingly recognize the value of a college education, regardless of race or ethnic background. Young Hispanics and African Americans are less likely to say that nearly all their friends are going to college, but they're more likely to say their friends are impressed by someone with a college degree. Most say they got encouragement from teachers and parents, although half say there weren't enough counselors in their school.

Lack of money isn't the only reason young people don't go on to college, but in "Life After High School" it was a recurring theme. Young Hispanics and African Americans are less confident that students can find money for college and most of those in college say they would have gone to a different school if money wasn't an issue.

But our focus group sessions with Hispanic high school students, reported in "With Diploma in Hand," suggest some other barriers students might face in pursuing higher education. Some promising students, particularly when they are the first in their family to go to college, may be derailed by poor understanding of how the admissions game is played, and little nuts-and-bolts guidance from adults who lack experience with college themselves.

Find out more about "Life After High School: Young People Talk about Their Hopes and Prospects": http://www.publicagenda.org/research/research_reports_details2.cfm?list=31

Find out more about "Great Expectations: How the Public and Parents — White, African American and Hispanic — View Higher Education": http://www.publicagenda.org/research/research_reports_details.cfm?list=29

Find out more about "With Diploma in Hand: Hispanic High School Seniors Talk about their Future": http://www.publicagenda.org/research/research_reports_details.cfm?list=13

Read the Census Bureau press release: <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/006808.html>

Read The Washington Post story: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/09/AR2006050901841.html>

● *Source: Public Agenda*

New Research Shows Link Between School Communication and Student Success

A white paper released this month by the National School Public Relations Association draws a strong correlation between school communication and student achievement. According to the paper, successful communication at all levels of education, from school board to superintendent to principal, administrator and teacher, can be harnessed to boost parental involvement and develop a better understanding of what schools do. Plus good communication is critical to student achievement.

Some key findings of the report include:

—Parents and principals cite lack of time as the most common barrier to increased involvement, but research identifies lack of planning for partnerships and lack of mutual understanding as the two greatest barriers to effective family involvement.

—In schools where teachers reported high levels of outreach to parents, test scores grew at a rate 40 percent higher than in schools where teachers reported low levels of outreach.

—While 98 percent of teachers believe that effective teachers need to work with students' families and 90 percent see it as one of their school's priorities, they also find that is the area for which they feel least prepared.

You can contact whitepaper@nspra.org for a copy of the report.

● *Source: National School Public Relations Association*

Bridging the Language Gap: Bilingual School Liaisons Ease Transition for Immigrant Parents

As a new Mexican immigrant, Bertha Garcia was as nervous as her two children before she enrolled them at Elgin's Highland Elementary School. But worries about not speaking English or understanding the U.S. educational system faded with a smile and handshake from Carlos Trujillo. Since their introduction two years ago, Trujillo, a bilingual school liaison, has helped Garcia navigate her sons' days at Highland and other aspects of the family's new life, from checking on vaccinations to linking the Garcias to a church that wanted to support a needy family last Christmas. "More than anyone else [at the school], I feel the closest to him," Garcia said in Spanish. "He's very attentive. For us he's an angel."

With the Chicago area's immigrant population at a high of more than 1.6 million, schools are creating more bilingual roles to help parents cope with language and cultural barriers so their children will succeed in the classroom. Trujillo, a Mexican immigrant, and others like him, who speak second languages from Spanish to Polish to Urdu, often know students and families better than anyone else, experts say.

Elgin-based Unit School District 46 has more than doubled the number of bilingual liaisons, from 15 in 1990 to 39 today, to serve the families of the nearly 6,000 students who speak two languages. Other suburban districts—from East Aurora to the North Shore—have created such positions, using state funds or federal No Child Left Behind money targeted for the education of low-income or immigrant students.

Bilingual outreach efforts also have increased in the Chicago Public Schools, where funds for non-classroom positions are tight and growing tighter. Chicago, which serves 60,000 English-language learners, lists 17 bilingual parent advocates in elementary and high schools. Another 200 also may be bilingual but aren't listed as such. Advocates argue that bilingual liaisons fill one of the more important roles in schools, but money woes and uncertainty about funding limit their numbers.

In Carpentersville-based Community Unit School District 300, where seven liaisons serve the families of more than 2,200 bilingual students, educators would like to hire more but don't expect to anytime soon. "If it was up to me, I would have one in every building because it's needed," said Minerva Perez-Materko, a district coordinator for bilingual education. "It's less intimidating to just go directly to that person, even more so when they speak another language or come from another culture."

In Elgin U-46, liaisons such as Trujillo earn \$18,000 to \$36,000 a year. Parents often mistake Trujillo for the principal because he is involved in so many aspects of the school, said Principal Steve Johnson. "There's no job that he doesn't think is important to improve the school," Johnson said. "He's indispensable." Trujillo, 35, understands that many of the parents grew up poor with few years of formal education so he starts the

school year explaining some basics, such as calling the school whenever one's child is sick. Trujillo spends time each morning calling the families of absent pupils. If he can't reach parents by phone, he often goes to their homes before calling truancy officers. In his free time Trujillo sifts through thrift-shop racks to buy winter jackets for pupils. He also picks up job applications at factories and fast-food restaurants. He also freely hands out advice, telling parents it's never too late to go back to school and encouraging them to set college as a goal for their children. "They think if you have the language, if you know English, that should be enough," Trujillo said.

Though Spanish is the most common second language in the Chicago Public Schools, Polish, Urdu, Bosnian, Arabic and Chinese also are popular. Naseem Umar, the bilingual coordinator at Volta Elementary on the Northwest Side, works extra hours to oversee the bilingual teaching staff and help immigrant families with everything from parent council meetings to cultural dance shows, even personal problems. Umar speaks Hindi, Urdu and Gujarati, a language of India's west coast. "I have parents who close the door and tell me things—even marriage problems," Umar said. "They need someone to hold their hand." At a recent parent meeting in the school gym, staff members spoke to 75 parents in English, Spanish, Urdu, Gujarati and Arabic. Umar, a talkative woman, works in a small office adorned with maroon and gold handiwork from India and starts offering cultural lessons as she fills out a new pupil's enrollment form. She might tell an Indian boy to leave his purple-flowered backpack in her office and replace it with "a big black one," so that he won't be teased. She also explains the importance of making eye contact with teachers—especially when they're angry—or directs a parent to an Indian doctor who offers reasonable prices. Always, she tells parents to get involved in the school. "Back home, it was disrespectful for the parents to come and question authority," Umar said. "I have to tell them in America, if you don't come, it will be translated into carelessness."

Soo Lon Moy, a lead bilingual teacher at Healy School on the South Side, oversees parent advocacy. More than half the pupils are Asian, and at least 25 percent are Latino. Moy, who speaks Cantonese and Taishan, has seen parental outreach improve over her 30 years in education, but both she and Umar have helped immigrant parents with and without financial support. Sometimes, Moy gets funding to pay for the translation of her school's multilingual newsletter; at other times, parents or faculty do the translations for free. In the process a sense of community is born. Said Moy: "I find many parents, as they gain more proficiency in dealing with the school system, they come to school and make new friends, and that becomes their social support."

● Source: by Mary Ann Fergus, *Chicago Tribune*, February 2006

Supreme Court Limits Employee Speech

Permissible Reductions in Force (RIF) After Hatch Lawsuit

On March 14, 2006, the New Mexico Supreme Court issued a decision in *Cari I. Aguilera v. Board of Education of the Hatch Valley Schools* (“Hatch”). This case has important fiscal and policy implications for all school districts.

In Hatch, the plaintiff, a certified arts teacher, was discharged (“fired”) from Hatch Valley Schools during the term of her contract due to a Reduction in Force (RIF). After a hearing, an independent arbitrator agreed with the school district. The teacher then appealed her discharge to the New Mexico Court of Appeals. Relying on grounds that there was no “just cause” to discharge the teacher, that Court reversed the decision of the arbitrator upholding the discharge. The Court of Appeals found that “just cause” as defined under the School Personnel Act was limited to reasons based upon performance, competence or turpitude, which did not include a RIF. The Board of Education of the Hatch Valley Schools then appealed to the Supreme Court of New Mexico. The Supreme Court, although affirming the holding of the Court of Appeals as to this particular teacher, reversed the Court of Appeals’ finding that “just cause” could never include a RIF.

The Supreme Court ruled that a school district can discharge or terminate a tenured or non-tenured teacher due to a RIF, provided that it can demonstrate that “there is no other position for which the teacher is qualified consistent with the academic necessities of the district.” The Court reasoned that the district failed to show that it had attempted to place the teacher in another position. In making this ruling, the Supreme Court rejected the creation by the Court of Appeals of what is termed “a kind of super-tenure.”

The Supreme Court observed that although “a school board faced with a RIF must strive to find another eligible position for which the teacher is qualified... the school board is not required to imperil the quality of education or conduct a realignment that is proven to have a deleterious effect on the overall academic programs of the school system.” Therefore, after Hatch, districts can continue to RIF teachers as long as the districts can demonstrate that “there is no other position for which the teacher is qualified consistent with the academic necessities of the district.”

The Supreme Court also noted that there is a greater hardship resulting from a discharge, which occurs in the middle of the school year, than that resulting from a termination, which applies to the next school year, and added an additional requirement when a RIF by discharge is being considered. That additional requirement is that a school district must show “that it cannot survive financially for the present year.” The Court also implies that a district that conducts a RIF by discharge must consider use of their 5% cash reserve *prior* to conducting a mid-year RIF.

In summary, school districts can continue to discharge or terminate employees pursuant to a RIF, but they must ensure that they satisfy the requirements laid out by the Supreme Court. Every school district should, of course, have a written RIF policy in place, follow that policy, and document actions taken.

● Source: Willie R. Brown, General Counsel, NM PED

On May 30, 2006 the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its decision in a much-awaited employee speech case, *Garcetti v. Ceballos*, 2006 WL 1458026 (2006). *Garcetti* involved a Los Angeles County deputy district attorney, Mr. Ceballos, who alleged that he was demoted and mistreated in retaliation for accusing sheriff’s deputies of lying to get a search warrant and then testifying in favor of the defendant at a hearing on the matter. Mr. Ceballos asserted that he was asked by defense counsel to review a case file referred to in an affidavit by sheriff’s deputies which contained misrepresentations. Upon review, Mr. Ceballos stated that the affidavit contained serious misrepresentations and told his supervisors at the District Attorney’s office that they should drop the case. He also wrote a memorandum regarding his findings and then testified at a hearing in favor of the defendant. Following these events, Mr. Ceballos was transferred from his position, demoted, and eventually terminated from the District Attorney’s office.

The Supreme Court, in a five to four decision reversed a ruling of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, and held that, when public employees make statements pursuant to their official duties, they do not enjoy First Amendment protection and are subject to discipline for that speech. Justice Kennedy, writing for the majority, found the controlling factor to be that the speech was made pursuant to Ceballos’ official duties, relying on the principles from *Pickering v. Board of Township High School Dist. 205*, 391 U.S. 563 (1968) and *Connick v. Myers*, 461 U.S. 138 (1983). He went on to state that “restricting speech that owes its existence to a public employee’s professional responsibilities does not infringe any liberties the employee might have enjoyed as a private citizen.” The decision is interpreted to allow employers to control what the employer has “commissioned or created” and allows them to have the discretion to manage their operations.

While giving employers the right to discipline employees for speech related to their official duties, Justice Kennedy did warn employers not to restrict employee rights by creating “excessively broad” job descriptions. The opinion also reserved the question of whether the analysis applied in the case would apply in the same manner to cases involving speech, which relates to scholarship or teaching, i.e. academic freedom issues.

Critics see *Garcetti* as the end of employee speech, which raises “whistleblower” concerns. However, the case does little to change the previously existing law relating to employee speech. Under *Connick* and *Pickering*, employees enjoyed First Amendment protections when they are speaking as a citizen on a matter of public concern. *Connick*, however, specifically held that when an employee speaks upon a matter of only personal interest to the employee or the employee’s personal employment circumstances they do not enjoy First Amendment protections. See *Connick*, 461 U.S. at 147. In fact, the Court in *Garcetti* began its analysis by reviewing *Pickering* and *Connick* and stating that employee speech continues to be governed by the inquiries first outlined in those cases. In *Garcetti*, the Court specifically states the subject matter of Ceballos’ memorandum, which related to his job, did not end the inquiry as to First Amendment protection, because “the First Amendment protects some expressions related to the speaker’s job.” See *Garcetti* at p. *7.

The *Garcetti* case does little more than reiterate the previous standard for determining whether employee speech enjoys First Amendment protection. *Garcetti* announces no new rules or procedures for the determination and each case remains fact specific and needs to be analyzed individually.

● Source: Melissa W. O’Shea, the Cuddy Firm, LLP

Good Decisions Don't Just Happen

Over the course of the last month, I have been in intense conversations with a dear friend who is trying to make a life-changing decision – that of ending her longtime marriage. Much of what we discuss is not whether she should end it, but the factors that have led her to this important crossroad and her thinking along the way.

In our discussions, she often refers to an expert author whose writings she has come to rely on for support and insight. As I listen to the author's self-help theories, I can't help thinking of the obvious parallels between the processes we use to make life-changing decisions and board decisions that have an impact on the educational lives of our children. Consider these parallels:

- When approaching a life-changing decision, we encounter a series of stages that are used as stepping stones during our decision-making journey. They begin with fear of the unknown and self-doubt, and move to trust, transition, adaptation and finally, freedom. These stepping stones can also serve as stumbling blocks if not recognized and attacked. Boards can attack the stepping-stones by balancing fear with fact and self-doubt with stakeholders' input and validation. They must trust those who inform them, rely on good planning and leadership throughout the transition and build the capacity needed to support adaptation to the change.

- It is assumed that in order for us to make good personal decisions, we need to have grown up healthy and live by an instilled set of moral values. If a school system has a rich history and identified core values, and the board has taken time to establish a shared future vision, mission, goals and objectives, it will want to make sure than decisions are in harmony with them. Roy E. Disney once said, "It's not hard to make good decisions when you know what your values are."

- Asking smart questions is the key to finding creative solutions. This is where vision comes in. What can be gained or lost? Who or what other programs will be affected? What will it cost? How will we know it is working? When boards look beyond the decision to the impact it may have, they keep the vision alive.

- Every personal journey must have checkpoints to ensure that it is heading in the right direction. In the end, we hope that the journey resulted in a sense of pride and inner peace. Boards also rely on questions, which serve as checkpoints. Is the decision consistent with board practice? Will we be able to live with our decision? Will we be proud of it over time? If the answers appear to be, "Yes, this is for the greatest good of the largest number of children," or "Yes, this decision will promote good education," the decision may be clinched.

Causes for poor decisions

According to the National School Boards Association's *Becoming a Better Board Member*, there are several causes for poor decisions:

- *Framing the wrong question.* Asking the wrong question will not result in the right answer.
 - *Not taking enough time.* Nearly all questions brought before board for action require time. Expecting boards to act without adequate advance notice, as well as time for fact-finding and reaction, invites poor decisions.
 - *Acting on poor information.* Often, the board can have too much information or the wrong sources. Ample and accurate information is a key ingredient in making decisions.
 - *Acting under pressure.* The board will have to become skilled in differentiating pressure from objective advice or counsel. Major League Baseball umpire Richie Garcia once said, "Just because they are yelling at you doesn't mean that you are wrong."
 - *Letting emotions get out of hand.* Neither individuals nor groups can think clearly when gripped by anger, fear suspicion or partisanship.
 - *Failing to consider consequences.* The decisions boards make today will have consequences tomorrow and into the future.
 - *Failing to admit mistakes or adjust to changing circumstances.* Sometimes boards make mistakes. When it happens, admit it, try and rectify the error, and move on.
- There is no magic formula that will guarantee my friend's total happiness. There is not magic formula that will keep any of us from making poor decisions. In education, as in life, we need to apply logic and common sense, using reliable advice and thoughtfulness, and always keeping the vision before us.
- Someone once said, "The hardest thing to learn in life is which bridge to cross and which to burn." For boards of education, it is the true concern for the children who are entrusted to them that will make the decisions easier.
- *Source: Kathy LaSota, Deputy Director of Search Services and Board Development, Ohio School Board Journal, May 2005*

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Leader's Retreat
July 21-22, 2006
Sagebrush Inn
Taos, NM

Annual Convention
December 1-2, 2006
Marriott Hotel
Albuquerque, NM

Information will be available on the NMSBA website.
Go to www.nmsba.org, and from the homepage choose "Conferences"

Tidbits...

MEDIOCRITY: DEPLORABLE, YES. UNTIL WE CONSIDER THE ALTERNATIVE

The governors have come back from last year's National High School Summit and are proposing fixes for the nation's high schools. Those efforts generally fall into three categories: forming commissions, improving the collection of data, and changing high school core curricula and/or graduation requirements to more closely align with four-year public colleges' entrance requirements. They are the elements of a political program, which is not the same thing as being the elements of school reform. This is especially the case for proposals that demand that students take and pass more and harder courses. Such proposals certainly meet the test of political viability, but do they serve students, schools, or even the nation? Rona Wilensky says no. Raising standards without a systematic program for ensuring that all students have the support to reach them will produce two predictable outcomes: higher high school dropout rates and lower college-entrance rates, especially for students who are poor or of color or both. Raising requirements looks like a stand against "the soft bigotry of low expectations," but without the simultaneous commitment of will and resources to achieving equity, it is most likely to have the perverse effect of locking those without privilege out of opportunities for which they are truly qualified.

● Source: *PEN News Weekly, EdWeek.com*

CHILDCARE PRICIER THAN COLLEGE

The cost of sending a preschool-age child to day care in Wyoming exceeds the cost of sending a student to college classes in the state, according to a recent report by a national group. Parents of a 4-year-old in Wyoming pay an average of \$5,438 for preschool care each year, according to the study titled "Breaking the Piggy Bank: Parents and the High Price of Child Care," from the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. At the University of Wyoming, meanwhile, a resident student taking 12 credit hours each semester would pay \$2,208 in tuition, while a student paying out-of-state tuition would pay \$7,320. **The study found that the cost of child care exceeded the cost of college in 42 states.**

● Source: *PEN News Weekly*

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