

# Of Interest to Teachers

## Schools Hooked on Junk Food Income

A number of U.S. schools have negotiated contracts with various soft drink and candy companies that produce as much as \$100,000 a year for school projects like computer wiring, teacher training, and other uses in exchange for placing vending machines throughout their hallways.

Critics deplore the schools' promotion of foods high in sugar and fat, and worry about the fine print in the contracts. Schools are often required to install a certain number of machines or sell a minimum number of cans of soft drinks per year (sometimes as many as 50 per student). Many contracts threaten that if the machines are turned off at certain times of day, as required by state and federal law, schools will forfeit their guaranteed commission. The contracts also ban the sale of competitors' products, require that the sponsor's products be prominently displayed on menu boards, vending machines, and concessions, and grant exclusive advertising rights on athletic fields.

The proliferation of vending machines in schools is a relatively new phenomenon. As recently as 10 years ago, such machines were rarely seen on campuses. But as principals and school boards began to recognize the potential payoff from vending revenue in times of tight budgets, the number grew quickly. Some schools now receive as much as a quarter of their operating budget from vending revenue.

School districts have pitted one vendor against another, hoping for a better deal. The new U.S. Education Secretary, Roderick R. Paige, helped land a \$5 million exclusive contract with Coca-Cola in 2000 when he ran the Houston, Texas, school system.

Some communities have fought against the proliferation of snack machines in schools, in many cases de-

manding that only nutritious snacks be sold. The U.S. Agriculture Department delivered a stinging report to Congress in January 2001 recommending that all snacks sold in schools meet the federal government's nutritional standards. "One of the biggest challenges school meal program managers face is the competition with foods that are marketed to children through multimillion-dollar, glitzy and sophisticated advertising campaigns," the report stated.—Reported by the *Washington Post*, February 27, 2001, pp. A1, A8.

## Low Default Rate on Student Loans

According to a government report in the fall of 1999, defaults on federal loans to U.S. students at 7,000 vocational schools, colleges, and universities were at their lowest in more than a decade of tracking: 8.8 percent in fiscal 1997, down from 9.6 percent the year before.—Reported in the *Washington Post*, July 30, 2000, p. A8.

## Student Debt Lingers

Four years after receiving their college degrees, only 16 percent of student borrowers were debt-free, a federal study of 11,000 U.S. 1993 graduates has found. Sources of loans included family and friends, banks, and loans underwritten by the federal government.

About half of the students surveyed (51 percent) incurred debt averaging \$10,000. Four years later, 39 percent were still paying off student loans or had deferred payments while pursuing an advanced degree. The 16 percent without debt had repaid their loans or had them forgiven.

Borrowers who earned only a bachelor's degree paid off their loans at \$151 a month, on average.

Some interviewees had incurred

additional debt between 1993 and 1997. The 29 percent of graduates who later enrolled in Master's programs carried an average debt of \$17,200 and were paying \$244 a month. The debt averaged \$66,200 for those who completed a professional degree by 1997.

Most students deferred repayment while in school, but researchers said that few students had defaulted on their loans.—Reported in the *Washington Post*, July 30, 2000, p. A8.

## Quality Counts Explores Classroom Standards

U.S. states need to strike a better balance among academic standards, testing, and the tools that students and schools need to succeed, an *Education Week* report released in January 2001 concludes.

*Quality Counts 2001: A Better Balance*, the magazine's fifth annual report on U.S. public education, focuses on how state efforts to raise standards are playing out in classrooms.

Included are the results from a new national poll of public school teachers, which found that the vast majority believe the push to raise academic standards is headed in the right direction. A majority of teachers reported that the curriculum is more demanding than it was three years ago, and that students are working harder in part because of state standards.

But teachers also said that states are placing too much emphasis on state tests to drive changes in education.

The new study also found that states may be rushing to hold students and schools accountable for results without providing the essential support to meet higher expectations. And state standards and assessments, the report suggests, are still not good enough—a problem of particular concern, given the high stakes now attached to test results.

*Quality Counts* is available on the Internet at <http://www.edweek.org/sreports/qc01>.

## Raising Achievement

To counteract public criticism of the U.S. standards and assessment movement and to learn what has been happening under the guise of educational reform, the National Education Goals Panel held a series of hearing as well as two teleconferences in the last half of 2000.

The resulting report is titled "Bringing All Students to High Standards." Its conclusion: If some schools can do it, why shouldn't all of them be able to do it?

Although the reformers took different paths to achieve their goals, they were still able to significantly improve student achievement, often in the face of great odds, because of their hard work and a policy structure that supported them. Among the themes found by the Goals Panel were:

- High expectations for all students, especially those who have traditionally not done well in school.
- Consistency over time.
- Clear lines of accountability.
- Use of data to drive improvement.
- Improvement of teacher quality, especially through the use of quality professional development for educators already in classrooms.
- Expanding the school day and year for students struggling to meet the standards.
- Support for students and families by providing health and other services that remove barriers to learning.
- Collaboration with and support from the business community.

In addition to reaffirming its longstanding strategies for good professional development, the panel recommended putting a stronger emphasis on the selection and training of teachers, recommending that schools of education address this problem jointly with school districts.

Another recommendation of the

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panel was for higher education to be more involved with school reform, especially through K-16 councils and strategies to help educators gather and use data.

The report is available online at <http://www.negp.gov>.

## Attention, Adventist Educators!

If you hold a Master's degree or its equivalent in any field, you are invited to join the Adventist Professionals' Network (APN). This global registry



assists participating Adventist institutions in locating consultants, short-term volunteers, and candidates for positions while fostering international networking. There are no charges or dues.

Obtain a registration form by contacting APN at the following address: General Conference Education Department, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904; U.S.A. You can also request the form by fax: (301) 622-9627 or E-mail: 105541.3200@compuserve.com. Or you may submit directly the information requested via the World Wide Web: <http://apn.adventist.org/>

## Ups and Downs in Youth Violence

The U.S. Surgeon General's report on youth violence has mixed findings, indicating that while most vi-

	Public	Private
Books and supplies	\$ 681	\$ 700
Room and board	4,730	5,959
Transportation	658	558
Personal expenses	1,484	1,054

Source: *College Board, Trends in College Pricing, 1999*

olent crimes by American students are declining, some other less-serious crimes are on the rise.

The number of youths committing homicides and carrying weapons has decreased by about 50 percent since 1994, but arrest rates for aggravated assault have risen 70 percent since 1983, according to the study, released on January 2001.

The report states that the number of school homicides in the 1990s remained at less than 1 percent of all homicides committed by youths, but homicides in schools that involved more than one victim increased from an average of one to five per year nationwide.

In issuing the report, Surgeon General David Satcher noted the many prevention programs now available to schools. "This report confirms that, as a nation, we possess knowledge and have translated that knowledge into programs that are effective in preventing youth violence," he said. The report highlights various methods and programs that decrease the rate of youth violence and others that have been deemed ineffective.

The full report, "Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General," is available online at <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence>.

## School Quality Indicators

"Monitoring School Quality: An In-

dicators Report," just out from the National Center for Education Statistics, divides the impact of school quality into three areas—the training and talent of the teaching force, what actually goes on in the classroom, and the overall culture and atmosphere of schools. The report includes 13 indicators, divided into three areas.

The study suggests that school quality is enhanced when teachers have high academic skills, teach in the field in which they are trained, have more than a few years of experience, and participate in high-quality induction and professional-development programs.

To determine the effectiveness of classrooms, the report says that it is necessary to understand the content of the curriculum, consider the pedagogy, materials, and equipment used; and consider class size (low income/minority students learn better in smaller classes).

Finally, the report points to the effect of school atmosphere indicators on school quality. They include the quality of leadership, evidence of school goals, the development of a professional community, and a climate that minimizes discipline problems and encourages academic excellence.

The problem, says the NCES, is that availability and quality and data on these indicators vary widely, and must be kept up to date.

The report is available online at <http://nces.ed.gov/> or by calling John Ralph at (202) 502-7441.

## Frequency of Arts Instruction for U.S. 8th-Graders

Data gathered for the National Assessment of Educational Progress for its 1997 Arts Assessment shows that while programs in music and visual-arts instruction are well established for 8th graders in most U.S. public schools, extensive programs for either theatre or dance are much less common.

Fifty-two percent of 8th-graders attended schools where the typical student in this grade receives instruction in visual arts at least three or four times a week, and 43 percent attend schools offering this level of instruction in music. Eighty percent of 8th-graders attend schools that offer no instruction in dance, and 74 percent attend schools that offer no instruction in theatre.—National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Arts Assessment, reported in *Education Statistics Quarterly*, Winter 1999.

## Teachers and Computers

The National Center for Education Statistics has just prepared a detailed report on the use of computers by U.S. public school teachers, based on a survey conducted in the fall of 2000. About half of the teachers sur-

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veyed who had computers or the Internet available in their schools used those resources for classroom instruction, according to the report, "Teachers' Tools for the 21st Century: A Report on Teachers' Use of Technology." Only one-third of surveyed teachers said they felt "well prepared" or "very well prepared" to use computers and the Internet for classroom instruction. The NCES report concluded that teachers' ability to use technology effectively in instruction is often hampered by the age and limited capacity of much of their technology, the limited amount of time they have to learn and apply the technology to learning, a lack of technical assistance, and deficient leadership by school principals.

## Service-Learning and Community Service in U.S. K-12 Schools

In the spring of 1999, the National Center for Education Statistics conducted the "National Student Service-Learning and Community Service Survey" to obtain national estimates of the percentage of public elementary, middle, and high schools that incorporate service-learning into their curriculum and to provide data on school involvement in community service. Comparisons with two previous studies in 1984 and 1996 provide

some evidence that service-learning has become more pervasive since the early 1980s.

Some findings of the study:

- Sixty-four percent of all public schools, including 83 percent of public high schools, had students participating in community-service activities recognized by and/or arranged for through the school;
  - Fifty-seven percent of all public schools organized community-service activities for their students;
  - Thirty-two percent of all public schools, and nearly half of all high schools, organized service-learning as part of their curriculum;
  - Schools with service-learning tended to have gradewise service-learning, service-learning in individual courses that were not part of a broader grade- or schoolwide initiative, or disciplinewise service-learning programs.
  - Eighty-three percent of schools with service-learning offered some type of support to teachers interested in integrating it into the curriculum, with most providing support for service-learning training or conferences outside of school.
  - Most schools with service-learning cited strengthening relationships among students, the school, and the community as key reasons for practicing service-learning.
- Schools can implement service-learning in a number of ways, ranging from schoolwide, which involves every student; to gradewise, which is limited to students in one or more grades; to service-learning as part of

an individual course. Of schools with service-learning, 79 percent reported implementing the concept in two or more ways. The programs could be either mandatory or voluntary or a combination of the two.—From *Education Statistics Quarterly*, Winter 1999.

## Internet Access in U.S. Public and Private Schools

The Internet, with its vast array of information, can expand the learning resources available to schools by providing teachers and students with connections to libraries, schools, and government agencies. Information found on the Internet can broaden students' knowledge base and prepare them for an increasingly technological workplace. An analysis of Internet access in schools can help predict how many students will be prepared to use this technology effectively in the future.

• Between fall 1994 and fall 1998, Internet access in public schools increased from 35 to 89 percent of schools. The percentage of public school instructional rooms with Internet access also increased during this time period (from 3 percent in 1994 to 51 percent in 1998).

Public schools with a high student poverty level (71 percent or more of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches) were less likely to have

Internet access than schools with a low student poverty level (less than 11 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches) from fall 1994 to 1997. However, in fall 1998, high poverty level public schools were as likely to have Internet access as low poverty level schools.

In fall 1997, public schools with a high minority enrollment (50 percent or more) had both a lower rate of Internet access and a small percentage of instructional rooms with Internet access than public schools with a low minority enrollment (less than 6 percent). By fall 1998, the gap between high and low minority enrollment schools with Internet access had closed, but high minority enrollment schools were still less likely to have instructional rooms with Internet access.

In both public and private schools with Internet access, teachers were more likely to have access to E-mail, news groups, resource location services, and the World Wide Web than were students in those schools.—From National Center for Education Statistics, *Education Statistics Quarterly*, Winter 1999.

## College Students at Work

The majority of college students work to earn money while attending school. The table at the left shows the percentage of full-time, full-year college students in different types of colleges who work, and how much time they work per week.

A recent study by the U.S. Department of Education found that students who worked up to 20 hours a week were no less likely to finish their bachelor's degree than students who did not work at all, but those working more than 20 hours were less likely to finish their degree within five years. Most four-year college students who work do so less for than 20 hours a week.—U.S. Department of Education statistics, in *Managing the Price of College*. November 2000. ¶7

**Hours Students Typically Worked per Week While Enrolled Full-Time at U.S. Colleges**

	None	1 to 10	11 to 20	21 to 39	40 or more
Public four-year (in-state students)	26%	12%	34%	21%	6%
Public two-year (in-state students)	17%	6%	29%	35%	13%
Private four-year	28%	10%	33%	26%	8%