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Feature

Educational Entrepreneurs: Creating Models to Change the Way Schools Do Business

Jim Collins writes in his landmark book, *Good to Great*, “When you combine a culture of discipline with an ethic of entrepreneurship, you get the magical alchemy of great results.” Not only is this phenomenon occurring in the business sector, but it is also helping transform the social sector. Part of a fast growing trend in our society, “social entrepreneurship” is the idea of applying business principles to address social problems to impact and create necessary social change. The concept is being applied in organizations across the country to feed the hungry, build low-income housing, develop youth leadership, and foster stronger economic communities. The same is true in education, where entrepreneurs are the innovative thinkers who are helping schools and school districts transform into high achieving and results-driven organizations.

Education entrepreneurs have created many new operational models to change the way schools do business. Some of the key areas of the K-12 community where social entrepreneurs are gaining attention include changes in human capital, delivery of instruction, and leveraging innovation. Their success stories are worth examining for their potential to teach new lessons, inspire change, and serve as models to replicate.

Human Capital

Getting teachers to work in urban or rural districts, especially ones serving low-income and minority students, is not always easy, but [The New Teacher Project](#) (TNTP) and its [Teaching Fellows programs](#) have made it less difficult. TNTP, created in 1997 by Michelle Rhee (who just completed her first year as chancellor of Washington, D.C. Public Schools) is a 130-person, revenue-generating nonprofit dedicated to increasing teacher quality in high-need or hard-to-staff schools (*The*

Education Innovator, [May 2007](#)). Since its inception, the organization has trained or hired approximately 28,000 teachers to serve in more than 200 school districts by creating innovative programs that expand the pool of available high-quality teachers. TNTP has done this by identifying barriers to hiring good candidates and advocating for necessary policy reforms; working with school districts to optimize their teacher hiring and school staffing functions; ensuring the poorest schools have access to the best candidates and that schools open fully staffed; and developing new and better ways to train, prepare and certify teachers for public schools. TNTP’s efforts have been so successful that it was recently awarded a [2008 Social Capitalist Award](#), which is given by Fast Company.com, a community platform for people passionate about business ideas, to nonprofit companies that apply the tools of business to solve the world’s most pressing social problems.

The Teaching Fellows program, an alternative route to teacher certification, developed as one of TNTP’s core lines of business and operates in more than 15 locations nationwide. These nonprofit programs operate on a fee-for-service basis, and often, under performance-based contracts that keep them focused on goals and outcomes. They are highly selective and are designed to recruit and train high-achieving professionals from other fields to become teachers for hard-to-staff schools. The [New York City Teaching Fellows](#) (NYCTF) program, for example, has made a huge difference in the district and is credited with helping improve student academic achievement. A 2007 [study](#) published by the Urban Institute found that the NYCTF program helped to “level the playing field” by narrowing the gap between the qualifications of New

York City teachers in high-poverty schools and low-poverty schools. Other [studies](#) have had similar findings. Launched in 2000, NYCTF has addressed the critical shortage of teachers in New York's most troubled schools, in high-need subject areas such as mathematics, science, and special education. It has done this through the "alternative route program," which accelerates the process of bringing new teachers into the classrooms that need them most. Rather than completing a traditional teacher education program prior to entering the classroom, Fellows engage in a short, intensive, pre-service training program and complete further academic requirements while they teach.

Delivery of Instruction

As he accepted the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur 2008 award, CEO and Founder of [K12 Inc.](#), Ron Packard thanked the judges "for recognizing the advancement of high-quality education as a worthy entrepreneurial endeavor." K12 offers online curriculum and programs in the K-12 market. Responding to the need for a workforce that is prepared for the global economy, the company began developing research-based programs in 2000, as it consulted with experts in the various fields and examined many state standards, research reports, and model curriculum programs. K12 delivers services through partnerships with public virtual schools, an accredited, private online international academy, and through individualized products, which are used by after-school providers or by families that home-school their children. By recognizing the need for individualized instruction, harnessing the power of the Internet and distance learning, and providing more students better access to more and higher-level courses, K12 is helping to maximize learning for a greater number of students.

For example, in 2004, when the William H. Hunter School in Philadelphia moved to a new building, the school's leadership decided to create new facilities with the latest technology for all of its classrooms. As part of this effort, Hunter partnered with K12 to provide an innovative online curriculum. Students at Hunter were largely unaccustomed to the latest technology; of the 600 students, 95 percent qualified for free and reduced-price meals. To help the school adopt the curriculum, K12 trained the teachers and worked with grade-level teams and the school administration to boost student achievement.

The results have been impressive. In 2005, Hunter students significantly improved their performance on the Pennsylvania State Math Assessments. For the third grade, there was a 46 percentage point increase in mathematics performance (as compared to a 31 percentage point increase for the district as a whole). This resulted in 86 percent of students performing at or above the proficient level, as compared to 52 percent of students reaching this target in the district as a whole in 2005. For the fifth grade, students made a 22 percentage point gain (as compared to a 15 point gain for the district), which brought 45 percent of Hunter fifth graders (and 46 percent of all district students) to a level where they worked at, or above, proficient levels. This was the first time that all third and fifth graders at the school met or exceeded the adequate yearly progress (AYP) math goals.

[Virtual High School](#) (VHS) takes another innovative approach to online learning. It is a nonprofit organization focused on providing high-quality online education to schools, regardless of size, wealth, or location. Through participation in VHS, schools can expand course offerings available to their students, giving them the opportunity to take innovative, high-quality courses that may not otherwise have been available. VHS is not a replacement for a traditional school, but rather a complementary program for students seeking supplementary instruction.

VHS offers over 200 courses in a full range of subjects, in addition to Advanced Placement (AP) and pre-AP classes. There are membership options for individual schools, districts, and consortia of schools. Generally, each school commits one teacher to teach a VHS course, and, in return, the school may offer the opportunity to take a VHS online course to a certain number of students per year. Once schools become members, they can begin enrolling students. A 2003 grant from the U.S. Department of Education resulted in the formation of an Online Advanced Placement Academy (Online AP Academy). The grant enabled many low-income high schools and middle schools to deliver AP content to students. VHS piloted an International Baccalaureate curriculum that is now in use, too. VHS aims to be self-supporting through grants and membership fees, and advises schools on how to budget for their services by offering courses and webinars in grant writing. An international jury awarded VHS the [Stockholm Challenge Award 2001](#), which recognizes projects that make good use of information technology and result in a positive impact on

people's lives.

The Power of Leveraging Innovation

By partnering with and learning from education entrepreneurs, many school districts are seeing excellent results. Several organizations are helping these education innovators expand their impact and reach by investing in their vision and connecting their work with public school systems. [NewSchools Venture Fund](#) is a unique nonprofit that raises money from individual and institutional investors for entrepreneurs who want to transform education, especially in the urban sector. Created by social entrepreneur Kim Smith and venture capitalists John Doerr and Brook Byers, NewSchools has identified specific investment strategies, and their current endeavor focuses on several key cities, including New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington D.C., Oakland, and New Orleans. According to fund managers, "We chose these target communities because of their size, history of underperformance, and potential for transformative change." Earlier funds addressed other key leverage areas such as standards, choice, and accountability. NewSchools requires ventures that are seeking the fund's participation to submit a business plan and meet specific eligibility requirements including the ability to produce measurable outcomes for K-12 public education in the U.S., be scalable and sustainable, and be led by a passionate entrepreneur. It not only invests in organizations, but also assists them by helping them to build capacity, serve on their boards, set annual goals, and offer management assistance. The fund has also started several initiatives that serve to connect education entrepreneurs so they may learn from one another, build relationships, and share strategies.

NewSchools is committed to results-driven entrepreneurial education ideas. The firm advocates for social change because it has seen change happen through ventures it has funded. It believes in the force of nonprofit organizations that work in partnership with creative mayors and school superintendents. The impressive list of ventures -- over 25 nonprofit and for-profit organizations -- includes Acelero Learning, Carnegie Learning, Green Dot Public Schools, Lighthouse Academies, New Leaders for New Schools, Uncommon Schools, and Teach for America, among others. The missions of the organizations differ, but they all have an impact on underserved children.

Just three years old, the [Charter School Growth Fund](#) (CSGF) is helping increase the capacity of education entrepreneurs to serve more children; it offers funding and development to proven, high-quality charter school operators. CSGF, started by John Lock, a venture capitalist who, after a successful first career, decided he wanted to do something to help students succeed, calls itself "a social venture investment fund to significantly increase the capacity of proven education entrepreneurs to serve more children." The money in the fund comes from a handful of "anchor funders," as Jennifer Stern, a CSGF partner, called them in a National Public Radio interview. Stern said that these are major, active funders who are trying to transform access to charter schools and help innovative entrepreneurs "build scalable, self-sufficient schooling organizations that provide quality educational options to thousands of underserved families in diverse communities."

Charter operators who have demonstrated that they can successfully run one or more schools, shown significant achievement gains with underserved youth, and are dedicated to expanding their charter network, are eligible to apply for CSGF funding. CSGF operates with the support of over \$140 million for the development and expansion of charter school management and support organizations to increase the achievement of a greater number of low-income and minority students nationwide. Most charter operator applicants are initially offered help with their business plans and development growth plans. CSGF works closely with them during the planning phase to determine whether there is a strategic fit and whether the operators will be funded. The goal is to create 100,000 new, permanent seats for underserved students by 2015.

In the 21st century, it will take innovative leadership to help prepare more children for the demands of the information age. New ideas for high quality public charter schools, new ways to hire highly qualified teachers, innovative online content and curriculum, and capital investment in entrepreneurial ideas and organizations are all new ways of doing business that are helping to transform the education landscape.

Key Resources

- [The New Teacher Project](#)
- [NYC Teaching Fellows](#)
- [K12 Inc.](#)
- [Virtual High School](#)
- [NewSchools Venture Fund](#)
- [Charter School Growth Fund](#)

What's New ?

From the U.S. Department of Education

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings [joined](#) more than 300 national leaders in Washington, DC, for the Aspen Institute's [National Education Summit](#). The Secretary kicked off the summit with a dynamic presentation entitled, "Our Children - Joining the Fight for Education Reform." She released five [education indicators](#) that will complement *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) by providing a snapshot of national trends. Following her presentation, she participated in a discussion with Roy Romer, Chairman of Strong American Schools, Joel Klein, Chancellor of the New York City Public Schools, and Tom Donohue, President & CEO of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Juan Williams of Fox News and National Public Radio moderated the discussion.



Secretary Spellings unveiled the Leading Education Indicators at the Aspen Institute's National Education Summit.

The purpose of the bi-partisan event was three-fold: (1) to highlight the impact of the under-performing education system on multiple community sectors, including business, the economy, health care, and national security; (2) to establish a broad consensus on critical reforms necessary for producing an effective education system that will adequately support all sectors of the society and prepare children, regardless of background or family income, for lives of opportunity and citizenship; and (3) to produce and release an action plan outlining the steps necessary for building adequate public support to sustain effective education reform. (September 15)

Secretary Spellings named 320 schools as 2008 No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools. The award honors schools for helping students achieve at very high levels and for making significant progress in closing the achievement gap. A complete list of 2008 NCLB-Blue Ribbon Schools is available at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/awards.html>. (September 9)

Secretary Spellings [named](#) 16 members to the National Technical Advisory Council, which had been announced as part of the proposed regulations to strengthen NCLB. The Council's purpose is to advise the Department on complex and technical issues regarding the design and implementation of state standards, assessments and accountability systems. (August 13)

Eight appointments were [announced](#) as nominees to serve as Members of the Board of Directors of the National Board of Education Sciences (NBES). NBES is the presidentially appointed advisory panel of the Institute of Education Sciences (Institute) at the U.S. Department of Education. The board performs a host of duties, ranging from reviewing and approving the research priorities of the Institute to advising and consulting with the director on the policies of the Institute. (August 12)

Secretary Spellings [released](#) a statement on the class of 2008 ACT scores saying that scores "have remained largely steady, which is encouraging given that the number of test-takers has expanded rapidly to include many more students than ever before." However, scores in English declined, and Spellings called this "unacceptable when 90 percent of the fastest growing jobs require at least some post-secondary

this “unacceptable when 90 percent of the fastest growing jobs require at least some post-secondary education.” (August 13)

A Back to School edition of “*Education News Parents Can Use*” profiled key strategies for improving student academic achievement and showcased schools that have proven successful in closing the achievement gap and helping all students perform at high levels. The show featured information on NCLB’s focus on data dissemination and informed decision-making that has helped transform the roles of parents and teachers. The broadcast also spotlighted the Department’s Teaching Ambassador Fellowship program. The fellows -- classroom teachers on leave from their schools to work on policy at the U.S. Department of Education – gave their perspectives on improving learning. For more information, go to <http://www.ed.gov/edtv/>. (To watch this and other archived webcasts, visit <http://www.connectlive.com/events/ednews/>.)



The Institute of Education Sciences’ *What Works Clearinghouse* (WWC) has released three new reports. One report, which focuses on [intervention](#), examines “Reading Mastery,” a curriculum designed to provide explicit instruction in language arts and reading, while a [second intervention report](#) focuses on “Open Court Reading,” a basal program for students in kindergarten through sixth grade. The third report is a “[quick review](#)” and highlights a study that examined whether Los Angeles charter schools have higher growth in student achievement than traditional public schools. The study found that the academic performance index in charter schools increased more from 2005-06 to 2006-07 than it did in matched comparison traditional schools, but that the results are considered inconclusive by WWC because there is no evidence that the schools were initially equivalent. (Aug. 12)

A new [report](#) from the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance examines what happens to high school dropouts when they return to their studies and the circumstances that conspire to keep them out of school. Of 3,856 students who were studied, more than one-third dropped out again at least once over five years and 31 percent re-enrolled. In the end, only 77 of the 419 students who dropped out and re-enrolled went on to graduate within five years. (July 2008)



Free new children’s books are [available](#) to registered groups through the 2008 Back to School Book Donation. Earlier this year, the Department [teamed](#) with First Book and Random House to launch the 2008 Summer Reading Initiative. This initiative was the first stage of a national distribution of over 850,000 free new Random House children’s books to schools, libraries, and literacy organizations serving low-income youth across the U.S. This summer, 550,000 books were distributed. Later this fall, the Department has plans to announce the availability and subsequent distribution of the remaining 300,000 books earmarked for this campaign. Since 2006, the Department has partnered with First Book and major U.S book publishing companies to distribute three million children’s books. For more information, go to

<http://www.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/bookcampaign/>. (Note: To be eligible to register with First Book, an entity must: (1) serve children, at least 50% of whom are from low-income households, (2) be a Title I or Title I-eligible school, or (3) be a military family support program.)

From the Office of Innovation and Improvement

Assistant Deputy Secretary for the Office of Innovation and Improvement Douglas B. Mesecar [visited](#) Guadalupe Schools in Salt Lake City to present a charter schools program grant to the Utah State Department of Education. Earlier, Mesecar [visited](#) the Idaho Arts Charter School in Nampa, Idaho, to present a \$3,386,402 Charter School Program grant award to the Idaho State Department of Education. In addition, in July, Mesecar [visited](#) the Self Enhancement Inc., Academy in Portland, Ore., to present a \$9,500,000 Charter School Program grant award to the Oregon Department of Education. The competitive grants are through the Department’s charter schools program this year, which supports states’ efforts to plan, design, implement and disseminate information about charter schools. Additional states receiving grants are Florida and New York. (August 21)

American History

This fall, after receiving an unprecedented number of applications, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) will give more than 26,000 schools and public libraries free education resource materials—which include reproductions of 40 great American works of art and an illustrated teacher resource book with lesson ideas for all grade levels—through the “[Picturing America](#)” program. This NEH program is designed to promote the teaching and understanding of American history and culture by introducing students to some of America’s artistic treasures. For schools and public libraries that did not apply during the initial application period, the NEH is now accepting a second round of applications through October 31 – materials will be delivered in spring 2009. For more information and to apply, go to <http://picturingamerica.neh.gov>. (September 2008)

Education Reform

The [Thomas B. Fordham Institute](#) invites the public to the first in a series of “Great Education Debates.” “Resolved: A Stronger Federal Role in Education is needed in the 21st Century. Lessons from NCLB and Beyond,” will be held on September 24, from 5 – 6 p.m. Participants for this debate include: Hon. Roy Romer, Chairman, Ed in '08 and former governor of Colorado and Jon Schnur, Co-founder and CEO, New Leaders for New Schools for the affirmative; and Deborah Meier, Senior Scholar, New York University and Diane Ravitch, Research Professor, New York University and Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution for the negative. Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 1016 16th Street NW, 7th Floor, Washington, D.C. RSVP to Christina Hentges at rsvp@edexcellence.net or 202-223-5452.

A new report from Achieve shows that individual state efforts to set college- and career-ready standards for high school graduates have led to a large degree of consistency in requirements for English and mathematics learning. This “common core” is detailed in [Out of Many, One: Toward Rigorous Common Core Standards from the Ground Up](#). All 16 states discussed in the report are members of Achieve’s “[American Diploma Project](#)” network. (July 2008)

Raising Student Achievement

In preparation for the “back-to-school” season, the federal government’s Web portal, [USA.gov](#), has posted a collection of Web sites with resources for students, parents, and educators. Among the highlighted resources are online libraries for students and downloadable versions of the U.S. Department of Education’s [Helping Your Child](#) booklets for parents. (September 2008)

Students, schools, and districts recently received [results](#) from the first-ever Algebra II end of course exam from the American Diploma Project. The exam was developed jointly by 14 states. “The exam represents an important baseline from which states can now improve,” said Michael Cohen, president of Achieve. (August 2008)

Average scores on the verbal, mathematics, and writing sections of the SAT college-entrance exam were identical to last year’s, ending a trend in declining scores that began after the test was revised three years ago. A [report](#) released by the College Board also showed continued but slowing growth in the number of high school seniors taking the SAT. (August 2008)

Reading

Jumpstart’s “Read for the Record” is a campaign designed to bring attention to the importance of early education. By encouraging hundreds of thousands of children and adults to read the same book on the same day, Jumpstart aims to break a world record and make early education a priority. Join in the effort and read *Corduroy* with a child on Oct. 2. More information is available [online](#). (September 2008)

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) offers many [resources](#) for the back-to-school season. From “Junie B. Jones” to “Wayside School,” RIF offers book lists for children of all ages, ideas for educators, and tips for parents to help them make their children’s assigned reading more enjoyable. (September 2008)

Teacher Quality and Development

Urban teacher residencies (UTRs) represent one way that high-needs districts can recruit, prepare, and retain new teachers. In a new [report](#), the OII-funded Academy for Urban School Leadership in Chicago and the Boston Teacher Residency are examined, showing that there is promising evidence that UTRs are attracting a new pool of talented and diverse recruits and preparing them to be successful in urban classrooms. The report was collaboratively authored by the Center for Teaching Quality and the Aspen Institute's Program on Education and Society. (August 2008)

Technology

As NASA plans for long-duration missions to the moon, plant growth will become an important part of space exploration. As a result, NASA and the International Technology Education Association have launched the latest "NASA Engineering Design Challenge," which is to create a lunar plant growth chamber. The design challenge is open to elementary, middle, and high school students. More information is available [online](#). (September 2008)

The "World Wise Schools" program offers free cross-cultural educational [resources](#) online including podcasts, videos, slide shows, and electronic newsletters. Each resource reflects the overseas experiences of Peace Corps volunteers and aims to help children develop a greater understanding of the world around them. (September 2008)

Congress has approved the creation of a new federal research center as part of the latest [reauthorization](#) of the *Higher Education Act*. The new National Center for Research in Advanced Information and Digital Technologies will be charged with helping to develop innovative ways that educators can use digital technology in classrooms. The center will be established under the U.S. Department of Education and will be managed as a nonprofit organization, overseen by a board of directors. (August 2008)

Innovations in the News

Charter Schools/School Choice

Charter schools in Maryland are increasing, both in Baltimore City, where the charter movement has been robust since the state's charter legislation was enacted, and in at least five of the state's 23 counties. Baltimore County's first charter school, Imagine Discovery, opens this year with 460 students, and another 350 on its waiting list. According to Maryland State Department of Education officials, is dispelled by the fact that 80 percent of the state's charter-school students are African-American, and many are from economically disadvantaged families. [More—The [Baltimore Sun](#)] (August 24)

Parents of more than 160,000 home-schooled students in California may continue to do so, even without teaching credentials, a state appellate court ruled, reversing an earlier decision. The court upheld the position of the state Department of Education and state Supt. of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell, who have allowed home schooling as long as parents file paperwork with the state establishing themselves as private schools, hire credentialed tutors or enroll their children in independent study programs run by charter or private schools or public school districts. [More—The [Los Angeles Times](#)] (August 9)

Raising Student Achievement

The typical experience of the high school freshman is changing as the number of ninth-grade-only public schools increases. The number of schools has grown from 127 in the 1999-2000 school year to 185 in 2005-06, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Ninth grade is a critical year and districts, such as Southside Independent School District of San Antonio, are choosing the ninth-grade-only option as a way to improve student success and retention through high school. [More—AP] (August 23)

In Pennsylvania, 50 high school students participated in a two-week financial-literacy course through the Upward Bound program of East Stroudsburg University. The program was part of an initiative created by the National Endowment for Financial Education. The intent is to better prepare high school students for the financial decisions that they will inevitably face. A 2006 survey by Harris Interactive found that only 20 percent of college students feel “very well prepared” to manage their money upon entering college.

[More—[Education Week \(premium article access complements of Edweek.org\)/Associated Press](#)] (August 4)

The Monroe Technology Center in Leesburg, Virginia, unveiled a new academy for science, technology, engineering and math. The Loudoun Governor’s Career and Technical Academy’s goal is to increase student interest in technical careers by offering industry certification in four career clusters aligned with state and regional workforce demands. Students will have opportunities to receive college credit through dual enrollment at Northern Virginia Community College and Virginia Tech. The academy plans to serve 125 students this school year. [More—The [Washington Post](#)] (August 3) (*free subscription required*)

School Improvement

In Dallas, a second early college high school opened this school year, helping to meet the call from the Texas High School Project and state legislature for a “college-ready culture” in the state’s high schools. Like the 32 other early college high schools statewide, the Dallas Early College High School is recruiting students whose parents did not attend college and who may consider college attendance a financial impossibility. [More—The [Dallas Morning News](#)] (August 25)

Teacher Quality and Development

Technology is increasingly helping new teachers connect to resources, mentors, and other advice to help them through the critical first months and years in the classroom. Several networks, such as [Teachers Linked In Networked Communities](#), are serving novice teachers in multiple sites, including Denver, Memphis, and Seattle. Some, such as the Denver site, grew naturally out of the mentor-to-teacher-candidate relationships at the University of Colorado at Denver, to continue critical conversations despite distances and other barriers. In Illinois, the [Illinois New Teacher Collaborative](#), a partnership between the state board of education, the University of Illinois, and the State Farm Companies Foundation, shares best practices for new teacher induction statewide. [More—[Education Week](#)] (August 21) (*paid subscription required*)

South Dakota joined the ranks of states using the Internet to mentor new teachers this month. The state’s Teacher-to-Teacher Support Network will serve more than 100 first-year teachers via e-mail, phone calls, and a video conferencing system sponsored by the state education department. The new effort is “about supporting our newest teachers so that they are successful and remain dedicated to the profession,” according to Melody Schopp, director of accreditation and teacher quality for the state. The ratio of mentors to new teachers is one-to-two, and mentors will receive \$1,000 for the year, while participating teachers receive \$500. [More—The [Argus Leader](#)] (August 11)

Technology

Pennsylvania’s Classrooms for the Future is a laptop initiative entering its third year. The focus of the distribution is on high schools, and with 152 school districts being added this school year, up to 500,000 students in 543 high schools, and over 90 percent of the state’s districts are being reached. State support of \$5 million this year is providing computers, high-speed Internet access, and software for high school classrooms. [More—The [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)] (August 1)

Lockheed Martin Corp., as part of its development of the Orion spacecraft that will carry American astronauts to the moon and Mars, has launched an online resource for students and teachers about NASA’s plans for these upcoming missions. Orion’s Path, as it is called, contains 41 short segments geared to middle-school students on the SpaceClass Web site. Teachers can integrate the one- to two-minute installments into existing lessons to cover such topics as the moon’s origins and environment as well as the engineering behind spacesuits. Students are able to log on to “virtual labs” to go into more depth on areas of interest. [More—[Rocky Mountain News \(Denver\)](#)] (July 28)

As American children and youth spend increasing amounts of time on the Web and less on traditional reading of novels and other texts, researchers are beginning to explore questions that can inform the debate over the value of time spent online versus reading books. According to a recent study by the National Endowment for the Arts, in the past 20 years the percentage of 17 year-olds who read every day dropped from a third to just over a fifth. Literacy researchers are now investigating such questions as how reading on the Internet affects reading skills. [More—The [New York Times](#)] (July 27) (*free registration required*)

Purpose

The purpose of the U.S. Department of Education's online newsletter *The Education Innovator* is to promote innovative practices in education; to offer features on promising programs and practices; to provide information on innovative research, schools, policies, and trends; and to keep readers informed of key Department priorities and activities. The Department's Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII) and the Office of Communications and Outreach (OCO) share the responsibility for the newsletter's research, writing, and production.

Douglas B. Mesecar, Assistant Deputy Secretary, OII, and Lauren Maddox, Assistant Secretary, OCO, sponsor *The Education Innovator*, which is published monthly and distributed through EDPUBS.

Contributors

John McGrath
Doug Herbert
Executive Editors

Sherry Schweitzer
Editor-In-Chief

Cynthia Cabell
Senior Production Editor

Dramon Turner
Production Editor

Emily Fitzpatrick
Copy Editor

Pamela Allen
Kim Brodie
Doug Herbert
Dean Kern
Stacy Kreppel
Todd May
Kelly Rhoads
Kelly Scott
Issue Reviewers

Doug Herbert
Jumana Rogers
Tiffany Taber
Article Submissions

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