



Engaging Families

Supporting Students From Cradle to Career

Vol. 1, Issue 4

September 2011

Back-to-School Bus Tour Visits Great Lakes Region



During back-to-school bus tour, Secretary Duncan and Frankie Martinez-Blanco, confidential assistant of the Office of the Secretary, descend from bus in Pittsburgh

During the first #AskArne Twitter Town Hall, held Aug. 24, Sarah, a third-grade teacher, asked if it would be possible for the secretary to “tour and sponsor real town halls with educators.” On Aug. 29, the Department (ED) announced that Secretary Duncan and his senior staff would be holding more than 50 such events during the month of September.

On Sept. 7, Secretary Duncan and senior ED staff headed to the nation’s Great Lakes Region with a back-to-school bus tour theme of “Education and the Economy: Investing in Our Future.” Starting in Pittsburgh, the tour continued to Erie, Pa., Cleveland; Toledo, Ohio; Detroit; Merrillville, Ind.; Milwaukee, and Chicago, as senior ED officials hosted dozens of events.

The secretary and senior staff met with educators and also talked with students, parents, administrators, and community stakeholders. Topics dis-

cussed included the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge, a major competition in support of bold and comprehensive state plans for raising the quality of early learning programs by developing integrated, high-quality early learning systems that will help ensure that more children, especially high-need children, enter school ready and able to succeed.

Also discussed was the Promise Neighborhoods program, intended to significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children and youths in the most distressed communities, and to transform those communities. This program provides funding to support eligible entities, including nonprofit organizations, that may include faith-based nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and Indian tribes.

Discussion focused on the Investing in Innovation (i3) fund as well. This program provides funding to support local education agencies (LEAs) and nonprofit organiza-

tions, in partnership with one or more LEAs or a consortium of schools with a record of improving student achievement and attainment. The program’s purpose is to expand the implementation of, and investment in, innovative practices that are demonstrated to have an impact on improving student achievement or student growth, closing achievement gaps, decreasing dropout rates, increasing high school graduation rates, and increasing college enrollment and completion rates.

Other topics included K–12 reform; transforming the teaching profession; civil rights enforcement; efforts to better serve students with disabilities and English Language Learners; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education; increasing college access and attainment; and vocational and adult education.

(Cont’d. next page.)

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Every investment in a parent is an investment in a child.

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For additional details on Secretary Duncan's back-to-school bus tour, go to <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-announces-education-and-economy-back-school-bus-tour-sto>.

To learn more about the discussion, visit: <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2011/08/duncan-takes-to-twitter-to-answer-your-questions/>.

To keep up-to-date on all things ED, follow [@ArneDuncan](https://twitter.com/ArneDuncan), [@usedgov](https://twitter.com/usedgov), [@ED_Outreach](https://twitter.com/ED_Outreach), [@EDPressSec](https://twitter.com/EDPressSec) on Twitter, or visit <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/social-media.html> to see all ED social media accounts.



Resources

IRC

The Department's Information Resource Center (IRC) operates as a citizen contact center. The IRC offers members of the public information, referrals, and in-depth assistance on all aspects of federal education law and policy as well as on nationally focused Department initiatives. Services are provided via a toll-free telephone number in English and Spanish (1-800-USA LEARN). A Web portal is also available (<https://answers.ed.gov>), at which citizens can access the answers to more than 132 frequently asked questions, as well as submit questions via email to the Department.

Family Engagement Team

The Office of Communication and Outreach has a team of family engagement specialists (see left) that work with state and local education agencies to empower parents with the information, training, and education needed to be full partners in learning in the academic progress of their children. Serving as an information conduit, the team recognizes that parents need to be equipped with the tools necessary to make them informed partners and equal stakeholders.

For more information, please email parent@ed.gov.

New Publication

Countdown to School Success, a new back-to-school guide is now available. This month-by-month guide is filled with advice, tools, and online resources to help your children have a successful school year. To order copies, call 1-800-USA-LEARN, or visit <http://www2.worldpub.net/parenting/CountdowntoSchoolSuccess.pdf>.

News Update

Karen Mapp, of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, began serving as a consultant to the U.S. Department of Education in September 2011. One of her initial efforts has been to conduct an interview with the Office of Parental Options and Information Director Anna Hinton to learn about the office's upcoming activities that will integrate efforts across the Department and implement initiatives around family engagement. That interview is featured on the homepage of the Office of Innovation and Improvement and can be found at the following link: <http://www.ed.gov/oii-news/feature-conversation-dr-karen-mapp-consultant-family-engagement>.

Upcoming Events

There are several upcoming parent forums and summits scheduled:
Garland, Texas, Saturday, Oct. 22, 2011
Milwaukee, Wis., Saturday, Oct. 22, 2011
Chicago, Ill.; Saturday, Nov. 5, 2011 (Dads' Forum)
New Orleans, La.; Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2011 (Parent Summit)

For more information, please contact your regional family engagement specialist (see list to the left) or email parent@ed.gov.