



## Bits 'n Pieces Spring 2011

For use by School Leaders

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### Just the Facts

#### Early Childhood

The physical, social, and economic health and well-being of adults and society as a whole are strongly influenced by the early experiences of children, when the foundation for effective cognitive and social skills and abilities are developed. – Richard Chase, Jennifer Valorose, Wilder Research, *Babies In Minnesota, The well-being and vulnerabilities of our youngest children*, November 2009

- Most of the 286,580 children age 3 and younger in Minnesota are healthy, but a sizeable number (at least 15% to 20%) are vulnerable, as evidenced by—to the extent that data are available—inequities in access to services and in well-being.
- The most vulnerable children, particularly low-income children of color, make up a growing portion of Minnesota babies.
- For many of the indicators of health and well-being of our youngest children, the trends are relatively flat or have started to move in the wrong direction.
- Since 2000, the number of births in Minnesota has increased 9 percent to nearly 74,000. This increase is due to a 50 percent increase in the number of births to mothers who identify as African American, Asian, or Latina (48% of them foreign-born), and a 24 percent increase in the number of American Indian babies, while the number of births to white mothers has remained the same.
- 43,000 (15 percent of children age 3 and younger) have moderate or high risk for developmental, behavioral or social delay.
- 16,800 children age 2 and younger have special health care needs.
- 700 are homeless.
- 10 to 20 percent are cared for by mothers with depression.

#### Grads and Gaps \*

- In 2007 66% of U.S. males and 72.9% of females graduated high school.
- In 2007 national graduation rates varied in relationship to racial/ethnic differences.
  - Asian 80.7%
  - Black 53.7%
  - Hispanic 55.5%
  - Native American 50.7%
  - White 76.6%
- The national graduation rate increased from 72% in 2001 to 75% in 2008.
- 29 states increased their statewide graduation rates from 2002 to 2008.
- 15% of the nation's high schools produce more than half of its dropouts.

Note: \*Phi Delta Kappan, February 2001, *Dropping Out* and the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population survey. The U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) is widely used by governmental and non-governmental sources -- from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to the White House -- to report high school dropout rates. The CPS shows dropout rates at about 10 percent in recent years and declining some 40 percent over the past generation. On the other hand, measures of high school completion based on the National Center for Education Statistics' Common Core of Data survey (CCD) paint a darker picture, with high school completion rates holding steady at about 75 percent in recent decades.

#### Did You Know?

Teacher licensure requirements have been unenforced in about 1% of teaching assignments in Minnesota. (This information is from the *StarTribune*, April 10, 2011, Corey Mitchell and Jane Friedman article *State Ignores Teacher Licensing Violations* and includes data from the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Board of Teaching.)

- More than 900 Minnesota teachers (including charter school teachers) have been either unlicensed or improperly licensed for the classes those teachers have taught. (this is fewer than 1% of Minnesota's teachers)
- In addition to unlicensed or improperly licensed teachers the number of waivers and other exceptions granted by the state Teaching Board reached a total of 9,785 in the 2009-2010 academic year.
- More than 836 classes have been taught by teachers with licensure violations.
- The most common type of violation is teaching in a curricular or grade level assignment different than the one for which a teacher has been licensed.
- Some violations happen because schools can't find enough qualified teachers for certain subjects, most notable Spanish, Comprehensive Language Arts, and Music.

## Climate Control

School climate is not just bullying and harassment. That's just one component. Others are:

- Engagement – Do kids feel welcome, wanted, and academically challenged? Do they have positive relationships in school?
  - Parents – Do they have positive relationships with teachers and the principal? Do they feel welcome in the school?
  - Physical safety – Do bullying, harassment, weapons or substance use compromise safety?
  - Environmental health – What is the actual shape of the school? Is it well equipped and supported?
- Phi Delta Kappan, February 2010, *Safe at School, Interview with Kevin Jennings*)

## Technology

Twitter provides a quick, efficient, and easy way for educators to share information and for stakeholders to access that information without having internet.

Some practical twitter uses and guidelines follow:

- *The School Administrator*, March 2011, *Tech Leadership*, Joseph E. Zydowsky
  - School closings
  - Conference and test reminders
  - Tweet a link to relevant information
  - Tags that provide easy access to specific topics
- *The School Administrator*, April 2010, *Tech Leadership*, Brad Hughes
  - Beat the 140 character limit by linking to a web page with more information.
  - Remember typos stand out in short messages.
  - Add your Twitter address to e-mail signatures and district letterhead.
  - When you issue news releases or parent letters, tweet with a link to your website.
  - When a positive story is printed about your district or schools tweet it with the link to the story.
  - Limit personal stuff.
  - Do it daily.
  - Focus on what's ahead with tweets about upcoming events.
  - Check your followers occasionally and block those that are not interested in the information you are sharing.

## Values and variables

Luxury spending is back in fashion but the lag of essential purchases provides evidence of the income gap.

- Higher income households are experiencing increased wealth and spending more.
  - High end television spending was up 34.7% last year.
  - Winnebago sales have doubled the past year.
  - High end pet supply sales are thriving.
- Spending is depressed among low or no income people without job and those anxious about job securing increasing the gap between the haves and have-nots. (Star Tribune, October 27, 2010)

## Going Viral

(taken from *The Cold Wars*, Jennifer Ackerman, *Parade Magazine*, January 30, 2011)

- Colds send Americans to the doctor 100 million times annually.
- Colds account for over 1.5 million ER visits each year.

- Each of us gets as many as 200 colds in our lifetime, accounting for as much as five years of sickness and a year in bed.
- Colds keep U.S. kids home from school more than 20 million days.

## Quotes and Quotables

### Definitions

- Brain RPM is about increasing the speed at which repetitive acts are accomplished. – Kevin St. Jarre, author, educator and consultant
- Brain Torque is about the brain doing heavy work, deep and complex thinking. – Kevin St. Jarre, author, educator and consultant

### Communications

- If you have a defensible position make someone available to defend it. – Soledad O'Brien

### The Future

- Nothing is predestined: The obstacles of your past can become the gateways that lead to new beginnings. – Ralph Blum
- The only way forward was the telling and the hearing of the truth—of what we had been and what we had become. – Naomi Tutu
- We can try to hide from the truth but it lives in us and it poisons our ability to move forward. – Naomi Tutu

### Determination

- The public has a "learning curve" on tough problems, moving from initial consciousness of a problem, to working through the possible solutions, and then finally, resolution about what to do. – Daniel Yankelovich, *Public Agenda* founder and social scientist
- The block of granite which was an obstacle in the pathway of the weak, became a stepping-stone in the pathway of the strong. – Thomas Carlyle
- To find what you seek in the road of life, the best proverb of all is that which says: 'Leave no stone unturned.' – Edward Bulwer Lytton

### Personalization

- We can't just crank out standardized tests and expect that will make our schools better. We have to look at everything that a child needs to succeed. – Kevin Jennings, Assistant deputy secretary, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, U.S. Dept. of Education.
- Our minds are as different as our faces; we are all traveling to one destination—happiness; but few are going by the same road. – Charles Caleb Colton
- We do not know the true value of our moments until they have undergone the test of memory. – Georges Duhamel
- No Child should be declared maladjusted until we have given serious consideration to the possibility that *we* may be maladjusted, not he. – *Everything but Money*, Sam Levinson

### Just for fun (taken from *Coffee News*)

- The trouble with being punctual is that nobody's there to appreciate it.
- The farther away the future is, the better it looks.
- Why did the boy eat his homework? Because his teacher said it was a 'piece of cake'!
- For every action, there is a corresponding over-reaction.
- What is the most important thing to learn in chemistry? Never lick the spoon.
- Wise people think all that they say; fools say all that they think.
- People tend to make rules for others and exceptions for themselves.
- There are three kinds of people: the ones who learn by reading, the ones who learn by observation and the rest of them who have to touch the fire to learn it's hot.

To request more information, contact one of the above organizations  
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