

## Education Resources of Note

(For readers of our print newsletter, please note that website addresses referenced here will be available on our website ([www.mncae.org](http://www.mncae.org)), to make it easier for you to access these reports and resources.)

## Student Achievement Gap

*Study says differentiated math instruction may help close achievement gap*

**A new study**, based on federal mathematics testing data for 4th graders, **suggests that focusing on different topics for students from different racial groups may help reduce the size of the achievement gap** between students of different racial and ethnic groups.

The Harold H. Wenglinsky report can be downloaded from the online journal Education Policy Analysis: <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v12n64/>.

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*ASCD special report examines achievement gap causes, responses*

**ASCD**, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, **has issued a two-part special report on the achievement gap**.

Part one, looking at causes, is available on-line at: <http://www.smartbrief.com/alchemy/servlet/encodeServlet?issueid=51F2E644-4620-4FE1-92B7-34A018A931B3&lmid=archives>.

Part two, looking at strategies to close the gap, is available at: <http://www.smartbrief.com/alchemy/servlet/encodeServlet?issueid=83730B43-D4F2-40C4-8FB0-2F6D13DDF3E0&lmid=archives>

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## Upsala Student's Design Chosen for 2005 Student Recognition Program

The design submitted by a 6<sup>th</sup> grade student from Upsala Area Schools, **Austin Johnson**, has been selected for use as the logo for the upcoming edition of the Gathering of Champions, a statewide program honoring Minnesota's top academic achievers. Johnson's artwork received the most votes in an on-line advisory balloting conducted by the Center for Academic

Excellence (CAE), a non-profit organization that administers the program in partnership with the Minnesota Academic Excellence Foundation.

**The Gathering of Champions is an annual statewide event honoring students** who are named as Academic All-Stars by officials in participating schools. The honored students may include top academic achievers, students who have made a dramatic improvement in their academic work or achievement, and the top finishers in academic challenges and competitions at a regional or higher level. Johnson's artwork will be used as the visual centerpiece of informational materials and artwork for the 2005 Gathering of Champions.

**Since its inception in 1990, the Gathering of Champions** has featured a series of recognition ceremonies in a day long celebration at metropolitan sites such as the State Capitol, the Minnesota State Fair, and Camp Snoopy at the Mall of America. In addition to the statewide event, many schools honor their Academic All-Stars during a local school ceremony.

## 2005 Gathering of Champions

**The Center for Academic Excellence invites you to recognize your school's top-performing students in the 2005 honor roll of Academic All-Stars in Minnesota!**

Each year, the Center for Academic Excellence teams up with schools to celebrate academic excellence and to honor Minnesota's outstanding K-12 students as Academic All-Stars. **School teachers or administrators are invited to select their top students** (up to the top 5% of their student body), from one or more of three categories: consistent high academic performers (according to the school's own criteria of excellence), students who achieve despite barriers to learning or who have made an academic turn-around, and students who are champions in an Academic League challenge or competition at a regional or higher level. Program providers whose activities have been endorsed by Minnesota's Academic League Council also are eligible to name their event champions as Academic All-Stars.

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## Education Resources of Note Continued

### *Report recommends more minority teachers to close achievement gap*

A new report from the National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force recommends increasing the number of minority teachers to help close the achievement gap. The report is available via the Education Commission of the States, at: <http://www.ecs.org/00CN2253>.

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### *New Studies Identify Minority Parents' Wishes, Differing Perspectives on Out-of-School Activities*

Minority parents nationally would like more time with their children, job security and work schedule flexibility, and better quality childcare, according to a national study conducted by YMCA of the USA and Search Institute. Their report is available at: <http://www.abundantassets.org/building.cfm>.

A separate study by the non-profit organization Public Agenda shows that low-income and minority parents often are looking for out-of-school activities with an academic focus, while higher-income families are more comfortable with the content of their programs. The Public Agenda report looking at this and other perceptions of middle- and high-school students and their parents, can be downloaded at: [http://www.publicagenda.org/research/research\\_reports\\_details.cfm?list=2](http://www.publicagenda.org/research/research_reports_details.cfm?list=2).

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## 2005 Gathering of Champions Continued

The Academic All-Stars (along with their families and guests, including school officials) are invited to attend and participate in the Gathering of Champions (a special day of fun and recognition that has been hosted by Camp Snoopy in the Mall of America the first Friday in August the past two years). To participate, school officials only need to register their students on-line, by visiting [www.mncae.org](http://www.mncae.org).

## Academic Enrichment

The Academic League Council has openings for volunteers with an interest in supporting academic enrichment opportunities for students in Minnesota. Council members are asked to participate in two meetings annually, primarily to help review and endorse enrichment programs that are offered on a statewide basis in Minnesota, and one or two related events. Additional information is available by contacting the Center for Academic Excellence.

Academic enrichment program information is available at: <http://www.mncae.org> for programs that have been endorsed by the Academic League Council, including a list of approaching academic enrichment program calendar deadlines and copies of the *Reach for the Stars* catalog that lists all programs endorsed by the council.

## New National Reports Focus On Education Finance

*Education Week* has issued its annual edition of *Quality Counts*, a comprehensive look at the education system of each state and the nation as a whole. This year's issue focuses on public school finance systems, touching on such hot-button issues as linking funding to student achievement, the growing shift in focus from education finance equity to adequacy, alternative pay for teachers, sources of education funding, and education funding formulas.

In addition, this issue of *Quality Counts* provides updates on data from each state in the areas of focus from the previous eight issues, including standards and accountability, student achievement and teacher quality, among others.

*Quality Counts* is available on-line, providing the print articles plus some interactive maps and charts that give users quick access to state summary data. Access requires free registration if you haven't previously registered at their site. The main url is: <http://www.edweek.org/qc05>.

The url for the updated state report cards is: <http://www.edweek.org/ew/qc/2005/map.html>.

## Nominate an Outstanding Educator for the 2005 WEM Foundation Outstanding Educator Awards

You're encouraged to nominate an educator that you know or work with who has done an outstanding job of promoting ethics within their classroom or school, helping students overcome learning barriers, or advanced student achievement through academic challenges or competitions.

2005 marks the seventh year of the WEM Foundation Outstanding Educator Awards, which honors unsung heroes of the education profession in three categories: Academic Challenge Coach of the Year (for outstanding coaches of activities endorsed by Minnesota's Academic League Council), Teacher Achievement (for teachers who excel in advancing student learning in alternative or challenging settings), and Ethics in Education (for individuals or teams that promote ethical behavior in curriculum and personal practice).

Currently practicing educators from public and non-public schools, including charter schools, are eligible for nomination. (Nominations from students and parents are especially encouraged, and we thank you in advance for any assistance you can provide in sharing nomination information within your school community.) Nominees will be asked to complete and return an application package by April 22, 2005, so we recommend early nominations to give them ample time to respond.

This year, CAE is teaming with the service cooperative members of the Minnesota Regional Service Agency to name finalists in each of the three categories in eight regions of the state. Six statewide honorees will be chosen by a blue-ribbon panel of judges from that pool of 24 finalists. The six statewide honorees each will be awarded an unrestricted \$10,000 cash prize and crystal apple, courtesy of the WEM Foundation.

Additional information, including category and on-line nomination details, is available at: [http://www.mncae.org/wem\\_foundation.html](http://www.mncae.org/wem_foundation.html), or by contacting the Center for Academic Excellence.

## State Budget Officials Report On State Finance and Spending Outlooks

Two separate national reports show that spending on health care and education will be at the forefront of legislative activity in the majority of states this year.

A report from the National Conference of State Legislatures is available on-line at: <http://www.ncsl.org/print/fiscal/sbu2005-0411.pdf>.

A report compiled by the National Association of State Budget Officers and the National Governors Association can be found at: <http://www.nasbo.org/Publications/fiscalsurvey/fsfall2004.pdf>

## On-line Federal Reports

### *Crime and Safety Data*

The federal government's 2004 report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety is now available on-line, at: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2005002>.

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### *High School Completion and Dropout Data*

The latest federal report on high school completion and dropout rates, with data through 2001, can be downloaded from: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2005046>.

## On-line Tools for Schools

### *Resources for Educators*

The Gateway to Educational Materials (a service sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education), provides educators with access to a wide-ranging variety of educational resources available via the Internet, at: <http://thegateway.org/>.

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### *School Leadership and Student Achievement*

A free website providing principals with on-line tools, information and resources targeted at developing school leadership in support of higher student achievement, sponsored by the Institute for Educational Leadership and Temple University's Laboratory for Student Success, is located at: <http://www.e-lead.org>.

# That's Academic!

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## Staff

Les Martisko  
Executive Director  
Wayne Hayes  
Program Service & Sales  
Joyce Swenson  
Program Administration

## Program Consultants

Jamie Crannell  
Gary Floss  
Rick Hokanson  
Lois Mackin  
Zona Sharp-Burk

## Strategic Partners

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Beverly Sullivan

## Academic Standards Advocate Calls For Increased Focus On High School Curricula

A national organization that advocates for higher academic standards and expectations says no state's minimum expectations for high school students are challenging enough for all students to succeed when they graduate. In advance of a scheduled February 2005 national summit that will explore ideas on how to improve the nation's high schools, Achieve, Inc., says states should require four years of rigorous math and four years of grade-level English studies in high school to better prepare students for college or the workforce. The Achieve report can be downloaded from: [http://www.achieve.org/dstore.nsf/Lookup/coursetaking/\\$file/coursetaking.pdf](http://www.achieve.org/dstore.nsf/Lookup/coursetaking/$file/coursetaking.pdf).

**The Center for Academic Excellence**  
a catalyst for educational excellence. . .second to none

*"We Can't Put Student Success on Hold"*

## Recognizing Outstanding Teaching and Learning . . .

Public recognition of our accomplishments often motivates us to set high goals, and often encourages others to do the same. Recognizing outstanding teaching and learning is just as important as promoting academic excellence at all levels. It is our pleasure to work with sponsors and partner with schools and districts to help bring public recognition to deserving students and educators.

CAE advances student success through long-term relationships with schools to achieve high levels of school performance.

The Center for Academic Excellence supports and recognized high levels of academic achievement for all students.

- Challenging students to stretch, achieve and innovate.
- Supporting schools to learn, to improve, and to achieve results.
- Enabling K-12 policy and business leaders to support high expectations for school and student achievement.

**The Center for Academic Excellence**  
1610 Commerce Drive, North Mankato, MN 56003  
Phone: 507-389-2461, E-mail: [cae@mncae.org](mailto:cae@mncae.org),  
[www.mncae.org](http://www.mncae.org)