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Week of August 30, 2010

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Annual *Phi Delta Kappan*/Gallup Poll Shows Diminishing Support for Administration's Education Agenda

Americans are now less supportive of President Obama's education agenda compared to previous years, but they continue to favor the Administration's support for charter schools and efforts to make college education available to everyone.

Thirty-four percent of the respondents to the 2010 annual *PDK*/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools gave President Obama an A or B letter grade with regard to his performance in support of public schools, down from 45% last year.

Improving the quality of teaching was cited as the most important national education goal. School funding is also on the public radar—46% of public school parents identified this as the biggest problem facing schools in their communities.

When asked about underperforming schools, respondents favored keeping a poorly performing school in the community open with existing teachers and principals and providing comprehensive outside support. The Administration's turnaround models for underperforming schools include firing teachers and principals and closing schools.

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Some other key findings from the poll indicate that 68% of Americans have a favorable view of charter schools and would support a charter school in their own community. Most Americans believe that education is not a federal issue and believe that it is the state government's responsibility for public education in the United States. Seventy-one percent of Americans say they have trust and confidence in teachers. And more Americans believe that increasing teacher learning time would increase student learning.

Phi Delta Kappa International, in conjunction with Gallup, has conducted an annual poll on the public's attitude toward education since 1969. The 2010 findings are based on telephone interviews conducted in June 2010 with a national sample of 1,008 American adults. For more information, go to www.pdkintl.org/kappan/poll.htm.

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Tell Us What You Think: What Donated Equipment and Materials Would Benefit Your Classroom?

In the next year the U.S. Congress may consider tax incentives to U.S. companies in exchange for their providing a variety of means of assistance to science education classrooms, teachers, and schools.

Specifically, such assistance could include donation of laboratory equipment, computers and software, and in-kind assistance in the form of training and professional development–related services.

What kind of equipment and in-kind assistance would benefit your classroom? Let us know what you think! Please take a few minutes to complete [nine short survey questions](#), and thanks in advance for your cooperation.

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Fall Getaway—PLC Institute for Science Educators

NSTA's Professional Learning Communities (PLC) Institute will be held in Bloomington, Minnesota, Oct. 7–9. Science teachers and administrators are invited to attend and can expect to learn how to implement a PLC. Three outstanding professionals in the field, Susan Mundry, Katherine Stiles, and Karen Cerwin, will lead the discussions.

Susan Mundry is Deputy Director of Learning Innovations and Associate Director of the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Program at WestEd. She directs the National Academy for Science and Mathematics Education Leadership and is principal investigator for two National Science Foundation projects on teacher development in mathematics and science. Mundry is also an author of several books, book chapters, and articles and the co-developer of several simulation games on educational change.

Katherine E. Stiles, Senior Program Associate, STEM Program at WestEd, leads projects focused on professional development, science and mathematics education leadership development, teacher leadership, and program evaluation. Stiles is co-director of WestEd's National Academy for Science and Mathematics Education Leadership, providing professional development and support for education leaders nationwide. She is co-director of an NSF-funded project, Building Systems for Quality Teaching and Learning in Science, creating science education professional development materials and a simulation board game on developing professional learning communities in school contexts.

Karen A. Cerwin, WestEd K–12 Alliance Regional Director, supports regional, statewide, and national

efforts to provide high-quality science and mathematics for all students. Cerwin is part of a team that authored *Assessment-Centered Teaching: A Reflective Practice* (2008) and a chapter in *Professional Learning Communities for Science Teaching: Lessons from Research and Practice* (2009). Cerwin's current projects include working with a California Math Science Partnership (CaMSP) whose focus is developing teacher leadership for professional learning communities called the Teaching Learning Collaborative (TLC).

For details, visit the [PLC Institute web page](#).

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Nine States and the District of Columbia Win Second Round Race to the Top Grants

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced last week that nine states and the District of Columbia have won grants in Phase 2 of the Race to the Top competition. The 10 winning Phase 2 applicants are: the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Rhode Island.

According to the Department of Education, the 10 winning applicants have adopted common rigorous college- and career-ready standards in reading and math, created incentives to put the most effective teachers in high-need schools, and have alternative pathways to teacher and principal certification.

A total of 46 states and the District of Columbia put together comprehensive education reform plans to apply for Race to the Top in Phases 1 and 2. Over the course of the competition, 35 states and the District of Columbia have adopted rigorous standards in reading and math, and 34 states have changed laws or policies to improve education.

Read more at the [Department of Education website](#).

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The Kansas City Conference is Calling You

Science educators are invited to attend NSTA's first regional [Conference on Science Education](#) this fall, scheduled for Oct. 28–30 in Kansas City, Missouri. With a full plate of professional development workshops, seminars, presentations, and sessions covering science education pedagogy, content development, and techniques for improvement in student performance, the offerings number more than 2,000. Educators keep returning to these compelling face-to-face events because there is a need for personal growth—here is a venue to share with others passionate about science and an opportunity to learn from the best. Hear what past attendees say about their experiences:

- “I came to rejuvenate my excitement for teaching science.”
- “I came to gain new knowledge and experience from other elementary science teachers.”
- “I came to present/share collaborative work between teachers and researchers.”
- “I came to learn new strategies that can be implemented in my class or my school.”
- “I came to my FIRST conference to learn what it is all about. GREAT!!!!!!”
- “I came to be with other science teachers who love science like I do.”
- “I came for IDEAS, IDEAS, IDEAS! I'm a first year teacher with 3 different topics and in graduate classes.”
- “I came to see what others are doing with their community based projects and environmental projects.”
- “I came to view exhibits, hear major speakers, and network with other science professionals.”

- “I came to recharge 'batteries' with new ideas and info to use in my classes.”

Review some of our plans for your professional development in Kansas City. Featured Speakers:

- **Science Education: Conceptual Understanding at an Emotional Level** —Dr. Jeff Goldstein, director of the National Center for Earth and Space Science Education
- **Unleashing the Power of Data to Improve Science Teaching and Learning**— Aminata Umoja, consultant, Research for Better Teaching and the founder of Kilombo Academic and Cultural Institute
- **Brain-considerate Learning: Understanding the History of the Brain as the Foundation for Future Learning**— Kenneth A. Wesson Educational Consultant, Neuroscience
- **Tools to Deepen Students' Understanding of Hard-to-Teach Biology Concepts**—workshop for high school/college teachers
- **Evolution: Variation, Selection, and Time**—workshop for middle–high
- **Bringing Glaciers into the Classroom**—workshop for elem–middle
- **Engineering Modeling**—workshop for elem–high

Visit www.nsta.org/kansascity to use the session browser and view the many plans we have in place.

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Share Your Good Ideas

Submit a session proposal for NSTA's 2011–2012 conferences. Our 2011 area conferences include Hartford, Connecticut (October 27–29); New Orleans, Louisiana (November 10–12); and Seattle, Washington (December 8–10). In 2012 NSTA will hold its national conference in Indianapolis, Indiana (March 29–April 1). Deadlines for submissions are **January 15, 2011**, for the 2011 area conferences, and **April 15, 2011**, for the Indianapolis National Conference. For more information, visit www.nsta.org/conferences.

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RealWorld–InWorld NASA Engineering Design Challenge

The [RealWorld–InWorld NASA Engineering Design Challenge](#) invites high school–aged students to work collaborately as engineers and scientists to explore, design, and solve real-world problems related to the James Webb Space Telescope. Project solutions for the RealWorld (Phase 1) challenge are due **Dec. 15, 2010**. Teams who complete the first phase are then paired with participating college engineering students and engineering mentors to begin the InWorld (Phase 2) challenge.

Please note: Participation in Phase 2 is limited to U.S. citizens.

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