



June 2002

# GAINING GROUND

## Achieving Excellence in High Poverty Schools

Division of State Services and Technical Assistance

### OPPORTUNITIES TO LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND IN THE MIDDLE GRADES WORKING CONFERENCE

**Cynthia G. Brown**

When President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB Act) last January, this Administration continued the historic federal role of promoting equity and quality in elementary and secondary education. Yet, despite the advocacy of educators and supporters to improve the learning and development opportunities for middle grade students, federally funded programs before the NCLB Act traditionally ignored these students, focusing efforts primarily on elementary school grades. Programs such as Safe and Drug Free Schools and Gear Up aided middle graders; however, relatively little federal money was allocated to their core academic learning.

Four developments forced new federal government attention to middle grade students: the ratcheting up of education requirements for new jobs; international comparisons of student achievement; near universal adoption of the standards-based framework for education in all K-12 grades; and concrete evidence that specific education designs and approaches to classroom teaching and learning yielded gains in student achievement. This last development was confirmed in states like Texas, North Carolina, and Kentucky who have demonstrated achievement gains for low-income and minority students.

In overtly supporting middle grades, the NCLB Act represents a departure from prior federally funded education legislation. With a total of \$22.1 billion appropriated in NCLB programs, middle schools have finally received the support needed to extend and improve the quality of student and teacher learning time. The

NCLB Act provides numerous new opportunities for educators, policymakers, advocates, and parents to examine current instructional strategies and to design more effective ones. They include:

- Opportunities to spend wisely much more money targeted to high poverty schools
- Opportunities to design better Title I programs
- Opportunities to expand the use of comprehensive school reform models
- Opportunities to improve the quality of teaching and professional development in high poverty and struggling middle schools
- Opportunities for high poverty and minority schools to employ high quality teachers and paraprofessionals
- Opportunities for struggling schools to get more and better help from districts and states
- Opportunities for schools to be recognized for success
- Opportunities to expand extended learning programs
- Opportunities to improve the use of technology in high poverty schools
- Opportunities for program flexibility and fund consolidation
- Opportunities to use federal funds through community partnerships to provide teacher release time to improve skills

These opportunities will be discussed at

length at the Opportunity to Leave No Child Behind in the Middle Grades Working Conference in Washington, D.C., on July 21-23, 2002. Together, the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, the Urban Middle-Grades Reform Network, and the Council of Chief State School Officers are convening a meeting of

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## CUTS IN ARTS EDUCATION COULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE TO BOOSTING TEST SCORES

**Richard J. Deasy**

School administrators tempted to cut back on arts education programs in response to the pressure to boost reading and math scores may want to reconsider after consulting a new compendium of research studies on the impact of learning in the arts.

The Arts Education Partnership, a CCSSO co-managed coalition of more than 100 national education, arts, government, and philanthropic organizations released *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development* on May 16, 2002. *Critical Links* explores the positive relationships between arts learning and academic and social outcomes.

The new compendium reviews 62 recent studies of the effects on students of their involvement in drama, dance, music, visual arts, and multi-arts programs and experiences. The studies examine cognitive effects related to student academic performance as well as increased motivation to learn engendered by participation in the arts. Studies also examine the development of skills essential to positive social interactions that are nurtured by arts programs and experiences.

More than two years in development, the compendium was commissioned by the Arts Education Partnership with financial support from the U.S. Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Partnership was formed in 1995 and is administered by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies through a cooperative agreement with the two federal agencies.

Lead researchers James S. Catterall of UCLA, Lois Hetland of Harvard's

Project Zero, and Ellen Winner of Harvard's Project Zero and the Psychology Department at Boston College screened an extensive body of arts education research to select studies that meet rigorous standards of quality and that focus on the academic and social outcomes of arts learning. They and other researchers then wrote summary reviews of the studies, commenting on their contributions to arts education research, curriculum, and instruction.

Five essays on the findings from the studies of drama, dance, music, visual arts, and multi-arts programs expound further on their implications. An overview essay by Dr. Catterall discusses the issue of the transfer of learning from the arts to other academic and social domains.

For further information about *Critical Links* or the Arts Education Partnership, please contact Lauren Stevenson at (202) 326-8686. *Critical Links* is available in a PDF format on the web site of the Arts Education Partnership at [www.aep-arts.org](http://www.aep-arts.org). It can also be ordered for \$25 per copy from the Partnership by calling the CCSSO's Publications Office at (202) 336-7006.

### Arts SCASS Perfecting a Web-based, Item Development Process

**Frank Philip**

The Arts SCASS has spent the past year initiating a new way to build an assessment item pool using the internet. With the help of a similar program designed in California by Heather Dabel and others at Kern County Schools, the Arts SCASS has implemented the Web-based Item Pool Project (WIPP) in six participating states. This process is designed to complement and supplement the ex-

isting collection of performance assessment exemplars already developed by the group.

The WIPP plan, a four-step process to be completed by the SCASS group over a three-year period, begins with developing selected-response arts items in the first year, and each year adding more complex items such as short- and extended-response items and increasingly more complex stimulus material such as audio, video, and digital imagery.

The first step is the development of a system of trainer/coaches in each of the states who, together with the SCASS/Arts representatives, train teachers and arts educators to generate the assessment materials for the item bank. Small grants from the Arts SCASS and from professional development funds in the states provide support for this process.

Second, new items are generated at the state level using specific criteria established by the SCASS group to assure quality and consistency. After the items are checked by the state team, they are submitted to the website in a format that will allow them to be sorted in a variety of ways such as arts form, grade level, or national standard. The raw items are then placed in a queue for review by content and assessment experts.

In the third step, teams of content and assessment experts examine each of the submitted items according to the criteria established by the group and either pass the item on to the next level of review, or send it back with comments for additional work. If the item is sent on, it receives another review by the SCASS members before it is placed in the final pool. All this activity takes place online in the virtual, website workroom.

And finally, when the item bank database has a sufficient number of items, it will be made available to the state departments of education and teachers in the participating states. Persons accessing the website to build an assessment can request items using the various criteria applied to initially classify the items. However, a strong caveat is provided. Because these items have not been attempted or piloted and no analytical data are provided, prudent assessment develop-

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# Maryland Chief Supports the Efforts of the Mid-Atlantic Early Childhood Education Network

Jana Martella

The Mid-Atlantic Early Childhood Education Network (MECEN), which is managed by the Early Childhood and Family Education Initiative of the Council of Chief State School Officers, convened its second forum in Baltimore, MD, June 3-5, 2002 to work on improving the early childhood education systems in their five jurisdictions (DC, DE, MD, NJ and PA). Keynote speaker, Maryland State Superintendent Dr. Nancy Grasmick, informed the more than 40 participants that their efforts were essential to assure school success for all, and most particularly to provide that assurance for those children arriving at school from conditions of poverty, those with disabilities, and those who are English language learners. The superintendent noted that the brain research and the emerging body of rigorous studies showing the benefits of quality education programs for young children convinced her and other policymakers in Maryland of the value of investing in the state's early childhood education system.

The network teams also heard from two panels of experts on standards development in early childhood education. Dr. Janet Hansen, Vice President for Education Studies from the Committee for Economic Development provided both lessons and cautions for early childhood education drawn from the K-12 standards-based reform movement. Marilou Hyson, Associate Director of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, stated that early learning standards have tremendous potential to benefit children if developed and implemented with the right purpose and if directed at the multiple domains and sound principles of early childhood development. Catherine Scott-Little, Project Director from the SERVE regional education laboratory, described recent work collecting and analyzing early learning standards from all 50 states. She posed a lengthy list of questions for the participants, cautioning that considering child, pro-

gram and professional standards for the field sometimes raises more questions than it answers.

Among the queries raised by Dr. Scott-Little was whether K-12, early childhood educators and the various stakeholders in the early childhood system are speaking from the same "dictionary" when addressing the subject of early learning standards. The state-based teams tackled this inquiry during one of their working sessions where they were asked to develop consensus definitions for concepts like: school readiness, child standards, outcomes, benchmarks, results and indicators. They returned to the general session highlighting the task at their tables was much more difficult than they expected.

A panel of state early education specialists from the CCSSO's Early Childhood Education State Consortium on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) provided guidance to the teams. Susan Anderson (IA), Penny Milburn (IA), Joyce Staples (CT) and Lindy Buch (MI), along with other state colleagues, are developing a dictionary early childhood education terms, along with matrices of state early childhood standards and assessment standards resources and guidance for states. They respectively highlighted the work of their subcommittees within the SCASS.

The MECEN members returned to this content frequently as they continued in team sessions devoted to systemic and strategic planning for their state early childhood education systems. This was the second forum of the five year project sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic Laboratory for Student Success at Temple University, one of the regional labs within the US Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement. These teams of inter-agency, multi-level early childhood education specialists and leaders will meet twice yearly for the five years to conduct

systemic planning with a broad focus to promote universal access to quality early childhood programs for all preschool children aged 3 and 4. Among the objectives for the project is strengthening state education agencies' capacities to foster state and local early childhood education or elementary school partnerships. The MECEN will next meet December 2-4, 2002, in Washington, DC.

For more information about CCSSO's Early Childhood and Family Education Initiative, please contact Jana Martella at (202) 336-7057 or at [janam@ccsso.org](mailto:janam@ccsso.org).

## CCSSO 2002 Summer Institute: Education's Role in a Democracy

Chris Gaylor

CCSSO will hold its 2002 Summer Institute from July 27-31 in beautiful and warm San Diego, California. The purpose of this year's Institute, *Responsibilities of Public Education in a Democracy*, will provide Chiefs the opportunity to explore and bring together citizenship and education, two pillars of democracy, and valuable facets for schools upon which to build.

Highlights from the proposed agenda include panel discussions such as "Citizenship and the Role of Public Education," "Analysis of the Practice of Standards-based Reform," and "Effective State Policy in Teacher Preparation and Professional Development." To celebrate the Council's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the Institute features an opening dinner with a 1920s theme, an evening dinner cruise, and a speech by Senator John Glenn (D-Ohio).

## Expecting Success: Self-Assessment and Resource Guide

By Elaine Bonner-Tompkins  
and Phillip Reynolds

The Expecting Success Self-Assessment and Resource Guide is the third in a trio of publications published by CCSSO. The Expecting Success publications stems from the Students with Disabilities in High Poverty Schools Research Project, a Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) initiative sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs under grant number H324D990005.

The Self-Assessment and Resource Guide is intended as a tool for states, districts and schools seeking to improve their capacity to serve diverse learners. It provides a self-assessment of best practices and policies expected to improve the academic performance of students with or at risk of developing disabilities in high poverty schools. This guide also includes an annotated bibliography of resources on inclusion, effective literacy approaches and other strategies that improve the capacity of schools to serve diverse learners. A preview of its contents follows.

### What Can State Educational Agencies Do?

What can state education agencies (SEAs) do to improve the capacity of districts to better serve students with and at risk of developing disabilities in high poverty schools? The self-assessment guide describes a number of strategies that an SEA can undertake. They include:

- Upholding a common expectation that all students can achieve;
- Revisiting the state accountability system to create stronger incentives for achieving student excellence and closing the achievement gap;
- Improving the transparency of the accountability systems to facilitate

data-informed decision-making and continuous improvement;

- Reorganizing and allocating resources to address student needs, particularly among diverse learners;
- Strengthening systems for providing services and supports to districts and schools;

### What Can School Districts Do?

What can school districts do to enable all schools, particularly high poverty schools, to better serve students with and at risk of developing disabilities? Themes and strategies that school districts can employ, which are identified in the self-assessment guide include:

- Examining the characteristics of students with and at risk of developing disabilities, particularly in high poverty schools, and systems of delivering services to diverse learners;
- Focusing on prevention, early intervention, and providing access to the general education curriculum for all learners;
- Using professional development to deepen teacher skills and instructional leadership;
- Strengthening systems for providing support to schools;
- Fostering strategic partnerships with families and communities to enable students achievement;

### What Can Schools Do?

What can schools, particularly high poverty schools do to better serve students with and at risk of developing disabilities? There are a number of strategies described in the self-assessment guide. They include:

- Believing that all students can be successful, including diverse learners;
- Encouraging regular and meaningful communication across staff;
- Viewing families and

communities as critical partners;

- Developing systems for identifying and implementing interventions prior to diagnostic testing;
- Using special education to fully integrate students into general education.

The Expecting Success publication will be available on the CCSSO website this summer at <http://www.ccsso.org>. Its sister publications are currently available on the web.

- Expecting Success: A Study of Five High Performing, High Poverty Schools <http://www.ccsso.org/pdfs/xpSuccCaseStudies.pdf>
- Expecting Success: An Analysis of Education Policy in Texas <http://www.ccsso.org/pdfs/ExpSuccTexas.pdf>

To order hard copies of these publications, contact CCSSO's Publication Office (202) 336-7006 or e-mail [KelleenW@ccsso.org](mailto:KelleenW@ccsso.org). For questions regarding this publication or the Students with Disabilities in High Poverty Schools Project, please contact Elaine Bonner-Tompkins (202) 336-7035 or [elainebt@ccsso.org](mailto:elainebt@ccsso.org).

## Assessing Special Education Students SCASS

Sandra Warren

Assessing students with disabilities has possibly never been a more complex issue than what is taking place in our current time and environment. ASES SCASS members have had numerous opportunities to exchange ideas and strategies, engage in research, collaborate with other SCASS, and provide federal offices with guidance on pertinent issues.

Recent meetings have provided members with the opportunity to discuss and collaborate with other states and federal representatives on the development of the Office of Special Education Programs' (OSEP) new biennial reporting process, meeting with the CAS SCASS to study the impact of NCLB on state policies and practices, and early childhood

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## Building Bridges in San Francisco

**Patricia Brennan-Gac**

CCSSO's School Health Project kicked off its Building Bridges to Healthy Kids and Better Students Program in San Francisco this May with five state teams who will receive support and technical assistance to help them increase enrollment in the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and Medicaid. The philosophy underlying the work of this Council Project is that healthy kids make better students. By focusing efforts to improve children's health, our ultimate goal is to increase student academic performance. One factor affecting the health of children is whether they have access to health care and one barrier to obtaining adequate health care is a lack of health insurance.

In 1997, Congress established SCHIP to provide free and reduced priced health insurance to children. Schools benefit from this program because many problems with students are health-related such as being hungry, tired, hung over from drugs or alcohol or anxious about violence. The Building Bridges Program is premised on the belief that by increasing enrollment in SCHIP, children will receive better health care and, as a result, come to school healthier and more prepared to learn.

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation awarded funding for two years to provide training and technical assistance to five states committed to improving school-based outreach for SCHIP enrollment. To achieve this goal, representatives from state education departments were required to partner with state health departments, school nurses, school districts, and community-based organizations. The states that were selected through a competitive process are Connecticut, Louisiana, Minnesota, Vermont, and Virginia.

At the kick-off meeting in San Francisco, the Council's School Health Project welcomed attendees with an agenda packed with training sessions and practical exercises, networking opportunities, and structured work environments. The main purpose of this conference was to build capac-

ity within these states by helping the teams understand the importance of establishing an outreach process that was coordinated at state and local levels so that it could be sustained beyond the two-year grant period. One of the first things that each state team realized was how much was going on in their states and how little they really knew about the work of other organizations within their own communities.

Next, the state teams were briefed on writing measurable goals and objectives in order to insure that each team's efforts could be evaluated at the end of the grant period. Over the next two months, the teams will work on a plan to increase enrollment in SCHIP through collaborative efforts. CCSSO staff will provide ongoing training and technical assistance as states finalize and begin executing their plans.

If you have suggestions on effective outreach strategies in your state or local community or if you have questions about the Building Bridges Program, please contact Trish Brennan-Gac at 202-312-6430 or [patriciab@ccsso.org](mailto:patriciab@ccsso.org).

## Child Trends Releases Series of Youth Development Briefs

**Nora Howley**

For children to learn to the high levels we want for them, many non-academic barriers to learning must be addressed. Youth development programs and opportunities can provide opportunities for young people to stay healthy, do better in school, and reduce risk-taking behaviors.

American Teens is a new series of seven research briefs summarizing and "translating" key research and evaluation studies on youth development and on programs and interventions to support young people. De-

veloped by Child Trends ([www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org)) in partnership with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the series is intended for educators, service providers, funders, the media and policy makers to help improve the health and well-being of America's youth.

Beginning May 21, 2002, through November 12, 2002, Child Trends will release American Teens Research

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## State Support Team Network to Hold Second Meeting in July

**Burton Taylor**

A collaborative of state teams which have agreed to work together in a series of three conferences to develop or strengthen their systems of school support to infuse research-based instructional practices in low-performing Title I schools will hold its second meeting in Washington, D.C. from July 15-17, 2002. The collaborative, known as the State Support Team Network (SSTN), consists of teams of state and local educators from Arkansas, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Kansas, South Dakota, and West Virginia. These states responded to an invitation sent to all chief state school officers in December 2001.

The focus of the Network is on (1) the creation and operation of school support systems, (2) the use of data to examine root instructional issues influencing student achievement, and (3) how reading instruction can be changed to improve achievement in the elementary grades. In addition, the upcoming meeting will address the creative use of funds to support low-performing schools.

These meetings are highly interactive and are intended to provide team members with an opportunity to think strategically about how they can apply the information shared at the conference to their own situations.

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approximately 100 education officials and advocates for middle grades school improvement. These participants were selected because they are committed to middle school reform and because they are in position to leverage NCLB Act opportunities into action in districts and states.

For a complete version of this paper please contact Cynthia Brown at [cindybrown@starpower.net](mailto:cindybrown@starpower.net). For more information about the Opportunity to Leave No Child Behind in the Middle Grades Working Conference, please contact Madeline Morrison at (202) 336-7039 or electronically at [madelinem@ccsso.org](mailto:madelinem@ccsso.org).

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## Arts SCASS Perfecting a Web-based, Item Development Process

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ment procedure demands that the material used should be thoroughly screened and piloted by the state or district before use in any large-scale application.

This web-based process offers a new way in using currently available technology to overcome some of the challenges of time, space, and money that are sometimes encountered in building assessment item pools.

For more information about CCSSO's Arts SCASS, please contact Frank Philip at (202) 336-7046 or at [frankp@ccsso.org](mailto:frankp@ccsso.org)

## Assessing Special Education Students

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assessments. Study groups are engaging in research related to alternate assessments, universal design of assessments, and reporting of assessment results. ASES SCASS representatives have collaborated in highly successful NCEO alternate assessment national conference calls and U.S. Department of Education meetings on combined reporting formats and NAEP.

During the June 2002 Large-scale Assessment Conference, members of the ASES SCASS presented a session on new biennial reporting activities to the Office of Special Education Programs. Future activities on the reauthorization of special education (IDEA) and OERI legislation are bound to capture the attention of ASES members in addition to their ongoing interests in alternate assessments, universal design of large-scale assessments, and reporting of assessment results.

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## Up on DEC Data on Enacted Curriculum Project

### Improving Math and Science Education with Data

#### Abby Potts

Schools across the nation are working to adapt and improve curricula and teaching practices to meet standards for learning established by states and school districts. "Standards-based reform" typically means that teachers must plan and implement their curriculum and teaching in relation to challenging content standards with higher expectations for student knowledge and capacities.

The goal of the Data on Enacted Curriculum (DEC) project is to assist middle school math and science teachers in using in-depth data on their current instructional practices

and curriculum content to improve effectiveness of instruction. Through support from the National Science Foundation, a project team led by CCSSO and including WCER and TERC Regional Alliance is working with the partner districts and selected schools. We are conducting research on how the data-driven design works as a strategy for improving math and science education.

#### DEC Progress '01-'02:

During the past school year the DEC project has focused efforts with 18 Phase 1 schools on building school leader skills in analyzing data from curriculum surveys, linking data to student achievement, and identifying ways to refocus instruction on areas of need. These steps are the core of the DEC model for assisting schools in analyzing their data to identify areas for improvement. The partner districts are Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Chicago, Miami-Dade, and Philadelphia. For further information go to the DEC website at CCSSO, <http://www.ccsso.org/dec/dechome.htm>.

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## SCASS Celebrates 10th Anniversary!

#### John Olson

In 1991, discussions began between CCSSO and states on forming new collaborative projects to work together on student standards and assessment activities. By 1992, several new projects were initiated, which were called State Collaboratives on Assessment and Student Standards (SCAAS). The early SCASS projects supported states in the development of assessment items and test forms. More projects were added over the years, including an assortment of state consortia and additional assessment development collaboratives.

This year we are proud to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the SCASS Program. The current list of SCASS projects includes 11 important collaborative efforts that provide a wide variety of valuable services and resources to the states. Many of the projects have been in existence for five years or more. Several have been actively addressing crucial assessment issues that

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# Comprehensive Assessment Systems for ESEA Title I

Jan Sheinker

The CAS SCASS is disseminating a new CD-ROM titled *Incorporating Multiple Measures of Student Performance Into State Accountability Systems: A Compendium of Resources*. The "Compendium" consists of an introduction, an organizational section containing a discussion of critical questions, a set of resource documents, six state profiles, a conclusion, appendices that include suggested readings, and a glossary. Documents included in the appendices address the topics of: multiple measures; design and evaluation of systems; validity; reliability; school quality issues; and state accountability systems and models. Internal and Internet links are provided on the CD-ROM, and sections are book marked for easy navigation to specific parts of the document.

A report titled *Incorporating Federal Requirements into State Accountability Systems: Lessons Learned From Four States* also is being finalized. The report provides examples of ways to integrate state and federal reforms by using four state examples selected for in-depth study. Four states were studied to provide possible models for integration of state and federal accountability requirements into a single system of standards, assessments, accountability and school improvement initiatives. These examples present successful efforts to coordinate state needs and Title I requirements in state accountability systems. The report examines critical policies and processes that enabled the states to design coherent systems that can be used for both state-specific purposes and for measuring school progress, identifying schools in need of assistance, and identifying exemplary schools.

A Web-based tool, *Data-Based Decision Making In School Improvement*, is being developed for use by school support teams, technical assistance providers, and schools. The content is based on a framework for data-based decision-making that includes those elements commonly required across all school im-

provement models and explicitly described in Title I school-wide planning requirements. The tool includes descriptions of each step in the process, examples showing how each step might be done, documents and on-line resources, and school stories. The web tool takes the form of a tutorial and includes methods of getting feedback from users, as well as a section for schools to record their own completion of steps in the process. An evaluation of the draft tool by members of several of the SCASS groups resulted in positive feedback on the usefulness of the tool and helpful suggestions for improvement that are being incorporated. The web tool will be field tested shortly by CAS member states and the State Support Team Network with low performing Title I schools.

Recently, the CAS SCASS has worked closely with representatives of the United States Department of Education to provide feedback on the reauthorization of ESEA, the No Child Left Behind Act. The Department conducted a focus group with member states at the February meeting in New Orleans. At the same meeting, in a joint session with the ASES SCASS, the groups conducted a question and answer session with Department representatives of Title I and the Office of Special Education Programs. CAS SCASS member states have also provided information from actual data analyses to demonstrate the impact of provisions of the new law in order to inform the Department's work on rules and guidance for the ESEA reauthorization. In support of the work states will be required to do to implement the new law, CAS SCASS is examining the provisions of the new law for standards, assessment, and adequate yearly progress to determine what issues require investigation. The group is also collaborating with the ASR SCASS to examine issues related to the implementation of the new accountability and adequate yearly progress provisions of the ESEA reauthorization.

## SCASS Celebrates 10th Anniversary!

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have become increasingly important over the years, such as Title I and the assessment of students with disabilities or limited English proficient students. Other projects have been added recently to address assessment-related needs of states, such as accountability systems and early childhood education.

We continue to work effectively in strategic partnerships and networks that involve state education agency staff, representatives from various Federal agencies, school districts, foundations, academia, and assessment service providers. These collaborations benefit all who are involved.

In the past 10 years, much has changed on the assessment landscape. Large-scale assessment at the national, state, and district level has grown tremendously. Every state's assessment program reflects this increase in the scope and importance. Policymakers and the public pay a lot more attention to assessment results, for better or worse. Recent Federal legislation reinforces the increased attention being paid to assessment and accountability.

Faced with this new reality, states now need to work together more than ever to meet the many challenges and demands. Collaborations of states continue to be a cost-effective approach to address assessment-related issues and for the development of new assessments. Over the past 10 years, the SCASS projects have proven their value to states in the types of services provided and the many products that have been developed and shared. In the upcoming years, we expect the SCASS Program to continue to provide this invaluable service to states.

To everyone who has been involved in SCASS over the past 10 years, I want to thank you for your contributions in helping to make this program a vital and important part of the assessment world. By working together we were able to make this happen. By continuing to work together, we can accomplish even more.

## SSTA Division Staff News

**Mona Sparks** has joined the SSTA Division and will serve as the primary SCASS administrative assistant. Mona will assist with all SCASS projects. She has been working at CCSO for over two years, and has been involved in many important projects and activities. We are pleased that she has joined us.

**Dee Clarke** has accepted a new job at the Council and will no longer be serving as the SCASS meeting coordinator. During the past year she has performed admirably and helped organize many meetings. We wish her well. Meanwhile, we are in the process of searching for a replacement.

**Phillip Reynolds** will be working as an intern from June through the end of August in the SSTA Division, providing research and administrative support, primarily on the Special Education Programs. He worked for the Council last year and we are happy to have him back with us this summer.

Mr. Reynolds is presently a Senior at Elon University in Burlington, North Carolina, with a double major in Sociology and Psychology, and a double minor in Anthropology and Women's-Gender Studies, with an informal concentration in Human Sexuality. He is currently exploring graduate schools in the area of Clinical Social Work. Mr. Reynolds plans to complete a Ph.D. and pursue a career as a relationship therapist.

**Meghan Frein** recently graduated from State University of New York at Oswego with a B.A. in Psychology and Women's Studies. She plans to pursue her Masters degree in Educational Psychology at New York University in Fall 2002. Meghan will be working as a summer intern from June — August primarily under the direction of Barbara Carolino and Michael DiMaggio. Her work will focus on the Immigrant Students and Secondary School Reform project and the Initiative to Improve the Achievement in High Poverty Schools.

## Gaining Ground Contributors

Michael DiMaggio  
*Editor*

Natalie DuBois  
*Layout Editor*

Elaine Bonner Tompkins  
*Director, Special Education*

Patricia Brennan-Gac  
*Senior Project Associate*

Cynthia G. Brown  
*Consultant*

Richard J. Deasy  
*Director, Arts Education Partnership*

Chris Gaylor  
*Intern*

Nora Howley  
*Director, School Health Project*

Jana Martella  
*Director, Early Childhood*

John Olson  
*Director, Assessments*

Frank Philip  
*Senior Project Associate*

Abby Potts  
*Project Associate*

Phillip Reynolds  
*Intern*

Jan Sheinker  
*Consultant*

Burton Taylor  
*Senior Consultant*

Sandra Warren  
*Consultant*

## HPSI Staff

Julia Lara  
*Deputy Executive Director*  
State Services & Technical Assistance

Madeline Morrison  
*Administrative Assistant*

Elaine Bonner-Tompkins  
*Project Director*  
Special Education

Barbara Carolino  
*Project Associate*  
English Language Learners

Michael DiMaggio  
*Senior Project Associate*

Mark H. Emery  
*Project Director*  
Extended Learning

Ayeola Fortune  
*Project Associate*  
Extended Learning

Gitanjali Pande  
*Project Assistant*  
Special Education

Burton Taylor  
*Senior Consultant*



## **Child Trends Releases Series of Youth Development Briefs**

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Briefs and accompanying What Works tables approximately every four weeks. Topics covered include: preventing teen pregnancy, encouraging better eating and exercise habits, promoting mental and emotional health, motivating teens in school, promoting positive social skills and encouraging responsible citizenship.

These issue briefs can help schools and their partners do “what works” to help all young people succeed in school and in life. Links to the briefs will be posted at [http://www.childtrends.org/r\\_pd.asp](http://www.childtrends.org/r_pd.asp)

For more information about youth development programs and schools please contact Nora Howley, Director, CCSSO’s School Health Project, at (202) 336-7033 or [norah@ccsso.org](mailto:norah@ccsso.org).