

Duncan's Clout May Be Sorely Tested as Incentives Dwindle

Persuasion and sanctions, not cash promises, loom larger on policy horizon

By Michele McNeil

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan faces an increasingly rocky education policy landscape and waning support for his aggressive K-12 agenda—at a time when his stack of bargaining chips is dwindling.

Compared to his assets in President Barack Obama's first term, Mr. Duncan has few sweeteners left to use as leverage. That's likely to leave him even more dependent on sanctions and persuasion

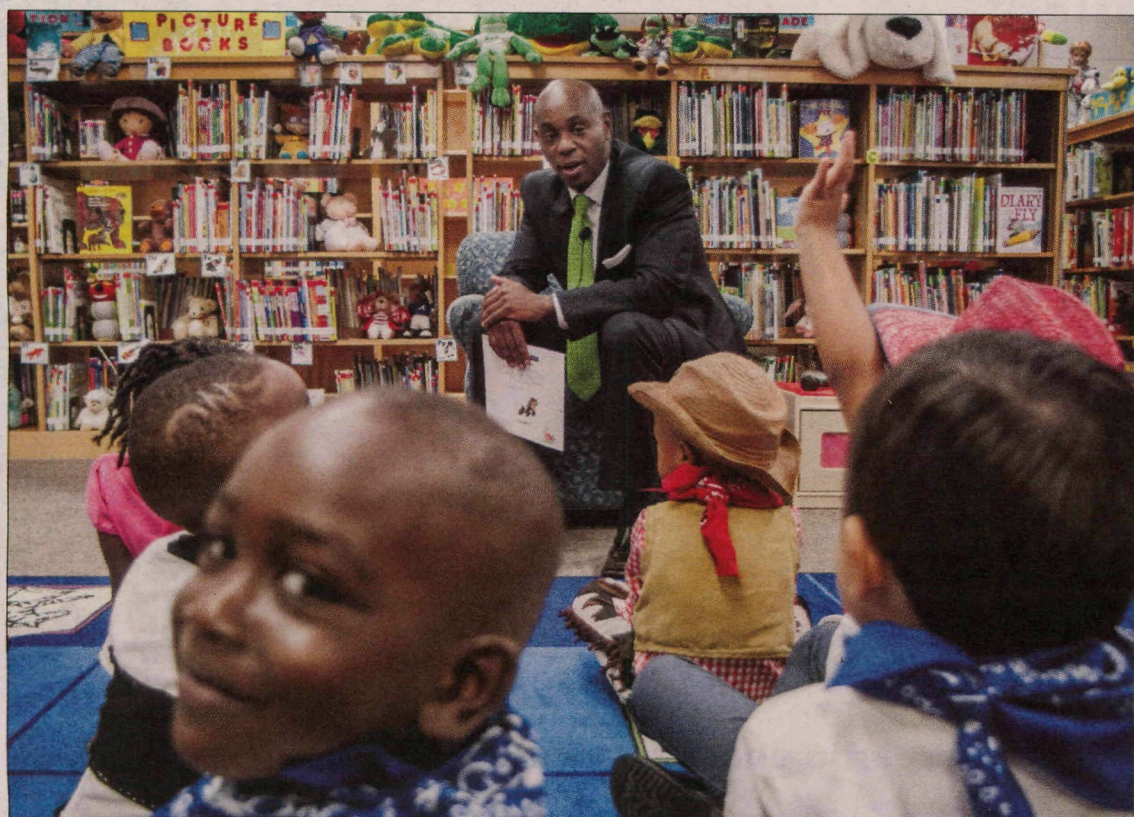
in the administration's final three years.

On the incentive side, he's spent nearly \$100 billion in economic-stimulus money approved by Congress in 2009 and used his own authority to hand out No Child Left Behind Act waivers to nearly every state.

But Congress seems more dysfunctional than ever, and less and less likely to give the Obama administration what it wants. After the 2014 midterm elections, when the administration will enter its twilight, Mr. Duncan's clout will diminish even more.

Yet this is a crucial time for education policy. Most states are on the verge of fully implementing the Common Core State Standards and are bracing for the tests aligned with them. New teacher evaluations tied to student academic growth are being rolled out across the country. And the No Child Left Behind waivers granted to states so far let them set up school rating systems approved by the U.S. Department of Education with student-achievement goals and inter-

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Timothy Ivy for Education Week

Shelby County schools Superintendent Dorsey Hopson II reads a children's book to preschoolers at the Lowrance Elementary School in Memphis, Tenn. Mr. Hopson says all of the district's schools can benefit from more autonomy.

Spotlight Turns on Memphis' Remake

Array of Strategies Aims to Transform Tennessee's Largest District

By Jaclyn Zubrzycki

Memphis, Tenn.

With a growing charter school sector, a new state-run district with plans to expand, and a reconfigured central office, Memphis is poised to become the next national center for New Orleans-style school governance.

Even as a commission spent the past two years planning for the largest school district merger in the nation's history—the former Memphis city district and an adjacent suburban system became the unified 140,000-student, 222-school Shelby County district on July 1—the landscape of governance within the legacy city school system was changing rapidly to favor parental choice and more autonomous schools.

The changes underway here include:

- A rapidly expanding array of charter schools. Home to just three charter schools 10 years ago, Memphis now has 41 charters, and more are on the way, including schools that will be part of some of the nation's best-known charter networks.

- A growing Achievement School District. The nation's second state-run school district, Tennessee's Achievement School District oversees 12 schools in the city and plans to transform more than 50 of them within Memphis, over the next five years.

- An "Innovation Zone." Created by the district as the analogue to the state-run district, the Innovation Zone, or I-Zone, encompasses 13 schools that have budget and hiring autonomy.

As a model for the Memphis efforts, district, charter, and state leaders are looking down the Mississippi River to New Orleans, where the state-run Recovery School District has converted most of the public schools in the city to charter status. The goal is to create a "system of schools rather than a school system," said Bradley Leon, the new chief innovation officer for the Shelby County district.

"Our belief is that Memphis is poised to be either the first or among the first major urban centers to fully and deeply transform public education for all kids—in our case, without having had to suf-

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Online Teacher Prep Proliferates, But For-Profits Dominate Market

By Stephen Sawchuk

Los Angeles

TEACHING THE TEACHERS
An occasional series

One by one, the faces pop up on the computer screen. Some of the aspiring teachers hold coffee cups; others have their hair in ponytails or pushed into caps.

It's 6 a.m., California time. Several of the virtual attendees are on a less punishing East Coast schedule. One is tuning in from Taiwan, where it's already nightfall. But nobody's in PJs, because this is a classroom and there are rules about comportment.

The teacher-candidates are taking part in the online Master of Arts in Teaching program offered by the University of Southern Cali-

fornia's Rossier School of Education. Over a span of months, they will learn how to teach in urban schools without meeting one another—or their professors—in person until graduation.

Online teacher education is probably the fastest-growing sector of teacher preparation. For-profit online institutions are now being joined by brick-and-mortar universities like USC here, and startups, both public and private.

"The big concern is how you build

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DIGITAL DIRECTIONS

N.Y.C. Tech Glitches Prompt Big Payout

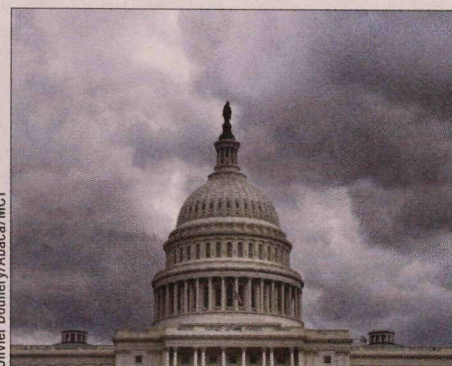
By Benjamin Herold

A \$41 million-and-counting settlement being paid to educators in New York City public schools could have big implications for school districts across the country struggling to provide adequate technology and Internet bandwidth for their employees.

In April, the New York City department of education began paying back wages to more than 30,000 teachers, school psychologists, so-

cial workers, and others after an arbitrator agreed with the United Federation of Teachers that many of its members had been improperly forced to work beyond their contractually mandated workday when implementation of a new student-information system was plagued by slow Internet connections, glitchy software, a lack of computers, and poor training and technical assistance. Initially, the legal decision went largely unnoticed outside of

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Olivier Douliery/Abaca/MCT

Fiscal Storm

Schools and districts weathered the first day of the federal government's shutdown without major disruption, although some educators are anxious about the long-term implications of Washington's budget stalemate. PAGE 20

Online Teacher Preparation Builds Steam Across Nation

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relationships with students, how do you connect with students?" said Corinne E. Hyde, an assistant professor of clinical education in the M.A.T. program at the Rossier school, where the online program was launched in 2009.

"It would seem to be very impersonal, but the [virtual interaction] ... makes it really possible to build those connections," she said. " Oftentimes, I feel like I know my students a lot better, because I'm seeing into their homes."

Meredith Curley, the dean of the University of Phoenix, sees greater acceptance of an online route to earning a teaching credential.

"Having more providers in the market really speaks to the fact that there is a demand," said Ms. Curley, whose for-profit university is the nation's largest producer of education degrees.

A Booming Field

Online teacher preparation has typically served practicing teachers seeking recertification or master's degrees to help them move up the salary scale. Only since the early 2000s has initial preparation online begun to make a mark.

The provider marketplace remains dominated by for-profit institutions—some operating wholly online—but the competition has been impossible for brick-and-mortar institutions to ignore. Of the 674 institutions responding to queries about online teacher preparation in a data-collection effort conducted by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, or AACTE, 36 offered at least one wholly online undergraduate education program as of the 2009-10 academic year, and 140 offered at least one online-only master's program for initial certification.

A whopping 74 percent of the institutions surveyed offered some courses online.

Among the reasons for the high level of interest is a desire to tap career changers and other individuals whose circumstances limit their ability to spend hours on campus.

That's the case with the University of the

Pacific, which has signed a partnership with Teach-Now, a new online teacher-certification startup, to offer a master's degree and initial-certification program.

"Most candidates cannot, with their family and adult responsibilities, take several years to pursue a teaching credential. We had to make it intensive and meet them where they are," said Michael Elium, the assistant dean of the Stockton, Calif.-based university's education school. "They need intense, high-quality, and affordable" preparation.

The expense of online teacher-preparation programs varies widely. Teach-Now's certification costs begin at \$6,000, while the University of Phoenix's tuition and fees range from \$15,000 to \$30,000 for a master's degree in elementary education. USC charges tuition identical to that for candidates in on-campus classes, which works out to about \$49,000 for the M.A.T. program.

Much online preparation continues to take place in an "asynchronous" format, a technical term meaning that learning takes place with candidates working in their own time, typically by participating through virtual message boards and completing written assignments and quizzes online.

Flexible Hours

There are obvious benefits to such flexible hours, especially for working professionals. At the same time, faculty members can quickly gauge candidates' participation, said Ms. Curley of the University of Phoenix.

"At this point, the asynchronous [interaction] seems to be a plus for us, and utilization of online platforms to share tools and resources is the focus of our innovation," she said. For instance, the university is making toolkits with resources on the Common Core State Standards available to candidates and faculty on its online portal.

Increasingly, though, the providers' delivery formats are evolving as well. USC has chosen a different path, devising a novel way to deliver online preparation in

real time. Teacher-candidates on a Web platform, which is managed by 2U, a Landover, Md.-based technology firm, can all see one another. A conference-call line keeps everyone connected. The platform allows students to message each other, contribute to oral or written discussions, and raise their hands—electronically speaking—to seek help.

Eric Bernstein, an assistant professor of clinical education, can separate students quickly into smaller groups for breakout discussions and then bring them back together with a minimum of lost time—something that wouldn't be possible in a large lecture hall.

That's only the beginning, though: There's "block party," where small groups of students are rotated quickly, and silent discussion, where students respond to readings and dis-

AWARDING DEGREES

Most of the top 10 providers of education degrees offer at least one degree online leading to initial teacher certification.

2011-12 Education Degree Production

Institution	State	Total Degrees ¹	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Type of Institution
University of Phoenix (online campus)	AZ	7,533	711	3,887	For-profit
Grand Canyon University	AZ	4,573	539	4,023	For-profit
Ashford University	IA	3,047	1,380	1,474	For-profit
Walden University	MN	2,502	14	2,285	For-profit
Western Governors University	UT	2,171	1,006	1,165	Nonprofit
Arizona State University	AZ	1,978	1,005	866	Public
Lamar University	TX	1,809		1,790	Public
National University	CA	1,770	76	1,694	Nonprofit
Nova Southeastern University	FL	1,735	100	1,302	Nonprofit
Arkansas State University—Main Campus ²	AR	1,698	309	1,378	Public

¹ Total degrees include associate and doctoral degrees. Some master's degrees do not contain a certification component.

² Does not offer an online teacher-preparation program.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics

Ed. Researcher Moves Into Certification Business

For decades, C. Emily Feistritzer has been one of the nation's foremost analysts of alternative certification programs for training teachers. Now she's taken what might be called the final plunge: crafting one of her own.

"Having spent 30 years reporting on what everyone was doing in the teacher-preparation and -certification space, I just concluded that nobody was really focusing on tomorrow's learning world," Ms. Feistritzer said. "There is too much controversy, too much lack of continuity, too much duplication of effort. If you could step outside of it and create an ideal program, what would it look like?"

Her answer, Teach-Now, recently opened its doors as a fully online teacher-certification program. It is currently approved in the District of Columbia, with negotiations ongoing to bring it to states around the country.

Funded partially through a \$250,000 grant from the New Schools Venture Fund, an Oakland, Calif.-based group that invests in emerging innovations, from technologies to charter-management organizations, Teach-Now dispenses with tradi-

tional unit-based courses. Instead, candidates complete eight units ranging from assessment to student learning in a digital era, plus engage in ongoing fieldwork and student teaching.

Using e-Portfolios

The fully interactive, custom-built platform is based on two principles in the teacher education literature, Ms. Feistritzer said: Teachers in training benefit from working with each other, and they benefit from lots of hands-on practice. So the platform uses the "flip" model popularized by the Khan Academy, an online education resource, in which readings and new techniques are introduced at home, while class time is spent practicing and honing them.

An "e-portfolio" tracks each Teach-Now candidate's scores on the activities that make up each of eight units of study to give candidates real-time feedback. Instructors must have taught for at least three years and received leadership roles or recognition for their work. Each supervises a

cohort of no more than 12 candidates.

Ms. Feistritzer has attracted well-known figures in the teacher-preparation world to the initiative. Among her hires is Donna Gollnick, a 25-year veteran of one of the national accreditation bodies for education colleges.

"I think the better online programs are really using the technology more effectively," Ms. Gollnick said. "Students do a lot of the work they would have formerly done in the classroom on their own, and the class becomes more of a coaching method of helping them understand what they've read, seen in a video, or observed in a school."

Ms. Gollnick will help smooth state approval of the program and partnerships with universities interested in integrating it. Already, the Stockton, Calif.-based University of the Pacific has inked a deal to use Teach-Now as part of a new master's degree program aimed at career-changers.

The program is not intended to be a competitor for other alternative routes, according to Ms. Feistritzer.

"I created it to be used by providers in the teacher education space," she said.

Teach-Now's inaugural class began in March and will complete the program in December.

—STEPHEN SAWCHUK

Bank Street Aims to Retain 'Essence' in Virtual Program

It's one of the ongoing challenges of preparing teachers and administrators online: Can on-the-job practice that is supervised remotely be effective—especially when it's the heart and soul of a program?

This fall, the Bank Street College of Education, a small, private New York City-based institution best known for hands-on approaches to preparing teachers and leaders, will begin to seek its own answers. It's beginning a study to examine how to translate the supervised fieldwork component of its math leadership program, now offered in person over three summers, into an online setting.

Bank Street's hallmark is its small, tightly knit cohorts of aspiring educators who meet periodically, plus the deep involvement of a faculty adviser. Advisers frequently visit each candidate at his or her school, interacting with him or her in a specific way.

"How do you create that relational learning online?" said Robin Hummel, the interim director of the math-leadership program. "We want to attract people from all over and make the program accessible to those who can't come to New York, but we don't want to lose the essence of what defines Bank Street."

From next January to May, a Bank Street faculty instructor will work with six New York City public school teacher vol-

unteers, who will participate in five real-time, online sessions together. Participating teachers will also receive two individual coaching sessions in which they'll receive planning conferences and debriefs on their teaching from the faculty member.

Enhancing Fieldwork

Meanwhile, a work group, staffed by experts in both math pedagogy and learning technology will advise the college and examine technologies that could enhance the fieldwork experience. Those might include earpieces that allow a mentor to communicate remotely with each candidate, Ms. Hummel said. But the first priority is making sure that the institution's "learner centered" approach is preserved, she said.

The study is being carried out with support from a \$50,000 grant from 100K in 10, a privately funded network of partner organizations that are seeking to train 100,000 effective math, technology, engineering, and science teachers over a decade.

The knowledge gleaned from the study will inform the online iteration of the math-leadership program and a second degree path, both of which are scheduled to debut in the fall of 2014.

—STEPHEN SAWCHUK

USC Brings Its Brand To Online Offering For Teacher Prep.

Los Angeles

Of new entrants to the online teacher-preparation market, among the most visible is the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education. Since 2009, more than 3,600 prospective teachers have enrolled.

To an extent, its success is the product of a series of fortuitous events. One was the arrival, in 2000, of Rossier Dean Karen Symms Gallagher, who wanted to move USC's small, somewhat marginalized undergraduate teacher education program to the graduate level and expand it. USC's stated mission for teacher preparation is to improve urban education nationally and globally, and at just 50 teachers a year, "we were clearly not even meeting local needs," Ms. Gallagher said.

Then, she was introduced to John Katzman, the founder of a technology company that came to be known as 2U. He pressed her to consider an online iteration of the newly formed Masters of Arts in Teaching degree.

Ultimately, a partnership emerged: Mr. Katzman agreed, on platform for Rossier and to endow a faculty position, while Rossier would continue to select high-quality candidates. Faculty advising the project insisted on a platform that would be fully interactive and that could record online interactions for future research.

Enrollments Rising Steadily

The ambitious endeavor was nevertheless a gamble for a research institution.

"What we really brought to the partnership was our brand, and USC's behind it," Ms. Gallagher said. "We are investing our reputation."

Enrollments have risen steadily. In fact, they have helped to shield Rossier from the steep decline in enrollments in teaching programs in California. The online MAT has also affected other traditional structures: Full-time faculty who teach in the MAT program and aren't located in Southern California work under contracts based almost entirely on their teaching duties.

It also has injected transparency into whether what's taught lines up with the program's goals. "Everyone can share with each other how they're helping students learn," said Melora Sundt, the vice dean of academic programs at Rossier. "MAT faculty are much more comfortable with the review of their own instruction and feedback."

The changes here have not always been comfortable for all. Some view the program's rapid expansion as overly corporate.

"People will say, 'It's about the money.' I always say, well, it better be—we're a private institution," Ms. Sundt said. "It is about our mission, but it feels yucky to some faculty members that you also have to consider the financial model for the program."

On the other hand, participating faculty say teaching online has led them to experiment.

"Oftentimes as professors it's hard to relinquish control, and this format forces you to," said Corinne E. Hyde, an assistant professor of clinical education. "If you get up in front of these students and lecture them, they're going to be on Facebook in 15 minutes. You're forced to really be on your toes, grab their attention, and hold it."

—STEPHEN SAWCHUK

discussion prompts in a chat window for all to see.

That variety is one of the main advances offered by online teacher preparation, said Sharon Robinson, the president of AACTE.

"What these students experience in their online courses is perhaps a stronger sense of community than if they show up in a large lecture hall and leave as anonymous numbers on the seating chart," she said.

For this story, an *Education Week* reporter attended several online sessions in two USC courses, one concerned with the social context of urban schools, a second on learning theories.

New Pedagogical Opportunities

Although the M.A.T. students don't take their specific teaching-methods courses until later in the program, professors attempted to link theoretical discussions to the real world. The professors often used video excerpts to have candidates apply knowledge from their readings.

In Ms. Hyde's class, for instance, teacher-candidates began to practice how to write specific learning objectives and select assessments to match. During small groups, lively discussions arose about the appropriate place of standardized testing in shaping teacher behavior.

Uniquely in teacher education, learning in a digital format opens up new pedagogical opportunities that professors can help candidates try out in K-12 classrooms, faculty members said. For instance, Mr. Bernstein, the USC professor, sometimes uses the silent-discussion tool rather than conversations during the discussion portion of his online course. The goal is to draw out shy candidates, while also challenging those who aren't as confident in their writing.

And that basic technique, he reminds candidates, can also be used even in classrooms without technology: Put up some questions on the blackboard and have students answer them on sticky notes.

"We're going to mix it up," Mr. Bernstein told the aspiring teachers. "And what you want to do in your classroom is mix it up and provide different types of opportunities for students to engage."

The student-teaching or "clinical" part of preparation is one element of teacher education that presents a quandary for online teacher preparation.

At USC, the responsibility for ensuring high-quality student-teaching rests with

2U. It has built a massive network of partners covering some 1,800 school districts, where candidates are placed for student-teaching.

Here again, technology provides the link: The aspiring teachers use cameras to document their experiences in the classroom and send them back for critiques by professors in the program. (Ironing out privacy issues with the schools in which candidates practice is 2U's responsibility.)

"We covered all the traditional [theorists], but the part I thought was most practical was that the majority of assignments had to be delivered on site," said Connor E. Nesseler, a recent graduate of the program who is now teaching 7th grade social studies and humanities in San Diego.

"I had to first develop a lesson, introduce it [at school], and deliver it, and come back and reflect on it," he said. "Professors would tell us to create it, experience it, and then we'd move from there [to] how to improve."

His one concern? Sometimes it was hard to come up with times for classmates to meet online during nonclass hours.

Staffing Models

In the field at large, the rapid expansion of online programs has led to even more differentiation in staffing models. In some cases, as with the University of Phoenix and Teach-Now, the programs rely more heavily on instructors with practical experience than top academic credentials.

USC has hired some 165 adjuncts to help meet demand, although full-time online professors, such as Mr. Bernstein and Ms. Hyde, don't sense a fracturing in the faculty. Instead, they say, the platform has improved efforts to work in concert to revise and improve the classes, both for those teaching on campus and online.

That's a good thing, said Karen Symms Gallagher, the dean of the Rossier School of Education.

"If you say you have a common course, you have to make sure every professor is following it," Ms. Gallagher said. "It is easier to know that online. And students will tell you."

About 1,700 individuals have graduated from the program since its inception. Those figures help put USC among the 30 top producers of education degrees, but still far below the largest for-profit programs.

Data on the performance of students taught

by teachers trained online are somewhat harder to come by. California, for instance, does not link teacher and student records directly; students and graduates from USC's Master of Arts in Teaching program now represent 47 states and 38 foreign countries.

Dean Gallagher summed up the challenge: "We can't just say, '80 percent of the teachers who gave us data look good.'"

Broadly speaking, the expansion of online teacher preparation has prompted some soul-searching among teacher-educators. The pedagogical benefits among the various online formats aren't clear and have yet to be extensively canvassed in research.

"I'm amazed that we don't see anybody doing data-based research. They're doing qualitative stuff, and that doesn't tell us much," said Paul Beare, the dean of the education school at California State University, Fresno. "If I hadn't seen what CalStateTEACH had done, I'd have had a bias against [online preparation]."

CalStateTEACH is an online preparation program offered through four of the public university system's campuses. Mr. Beare's research indicates that students surveyed gave higher marks to the online program than they did to CSU's campus-based programs.

It also remains an open question how much online teacher preparation differs in content from what's offered in face-to-face settings. The USC courses, for instance, focused on how to be a reflective practitioner. Later this semester, participants will encounter articles critiquing standardized testing and the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Coursework covers behavioral theory and cognitive development, all by now established themes in teacher preparation.

For his part, Mr. Bernstein takes pride in the fact that he's able to engage his students online as much, if not more, than if they were in a physical classroom. He flies from Connecticut to California to attend annual graduation ceremonies in person for the teacher-candidates he's taught.

"The biggest shock is our heights," Mr. Bernstein said about meeting the teacher-candidates he's taught in the flesh for the first time. "You can't judge that on the computer screen."

Coverage of policy efforts to improve the teaching profession is supported by a grant from the Joyce Foundation, at www.joycefdn.org/Programs/Education. Education Week retains sole editorial control over the content of this coverage.

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