

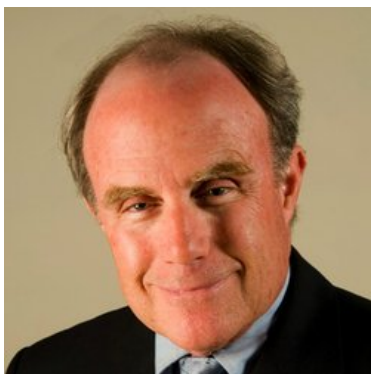
## Roundtable News, May 16, 2016

Greetings!,

As the Roundtable continues to grow, we welcome our new members and look forward to seeing everyone at our meetings in San Francisco and Washington, D. C. later this year. In the meantime, here's a round up of developments in education:

- Lack of clarity on special education
- Fat city in charter land
- Is education "reform" worth the demise of neighborhood schools?
- Chinese schools: A model for the world?
- Nation's shame: Spending and performance gaps across districts
- Toxic stress and child's developing brain
- High school football beginning to raise eyebrows
- Paddling legal in Georgia
- If the world were made up of just 100 people . . .

### Lack of clarity on special education



Jay Matthews

**A New Education Week report underscores the murky nature of special education statistics.** The data are characterized by lack of clarity on spending, opacity and the reclassification of children: "No one knows what's going on" [says Jay Matthews of The Washington Post](#).

Matthews, writing about a [recent Education Week analysis](#) of special education data, notes that researchers believe that large numbers of children who would have been placed in traditional disability categories have been reclassified into more specific disability categories as awareness of other conditions, such as autism, has increased. Other changes may have resulted from "bureaucratic obfuscation," as the No Child Left Behind Act created incentives for some districts to report smaller numbers of special education students.

"It has been 16 years since anyone has taken a big-picture look at how special-education dollars are spent," says Christina Samuels, one of the authors of the *Education Week* analysis. Matthews argues that this lack of information about demographics, spending, and the results of special education initiatives puts schools and students at a disadvantage.

## Fat City in Charter Land

**We haven't visited the scandal land of charters for months.** There are so many examples it gets tedious reporting on them. Two recent stories, however, remind us it's unwise to take your eyes off this private industry that's taking money out of public coffers to no obvious public benefit.



In Nevada, of the \$250 million provided to charters just in 2014, [fully one-fifth went to a profit-making chain](#) based in Florida, Academica. In California, the profits enjoyed by the online charter school chain K-12 [depend on ruses such as that employed by K-12's California's Virtual Academies charter](#). A student online for one minute is counted as "present" for the purposes of attendance figures (and reimbursements). Sadly, less than 50% of CVA students graduate and none are college ready.

Even non-profits aren't immune. The Knowledge is Power Program chain (KIPP), routinely hailed as successful, has [asked the U.S. Dept of Education to keep the American people from seeing data](#) that would let the public understand how well the chain's claims about success bear up to analysis. Claiming proprietary privilege, KIPP has tried to keep private its graduation and college matriculation rates, its use of public funds, its spending (including \$1.2 million to Disney World and \$1.8 million to the Cosmopolitan Hotel in Las Vegas), student attrition rates, standardized exam performance, and the amount and source of KIPP's private funding. KIPP is spending public money; data of this sort is routinely available from public schools; if charters are "public schools" as they claim to be, why aren't they held to the same standards?

## Is education "reform" worth the demise of neighborhood schools?



Alan Ehrenhalt

It's a good question. Alan Ehrenhalt, a senior editor at *Governing* magazine, asks about the consequences of abandoning neighborhood schools and forcing children to commute away from their neighborhoods each day to charters and magnet schools.

Local schools are neighborhood institutions and provide an anchor for local communities, Ehrenhalt writes. By closing them, districts disrupt the life of their neighborhoods and decrease the stability and sense of continuity for the pupils, parents, and employees of those schools. In addition, he says, the resulting commutes increase the physical danger and idle time of students, who are now required to travel long distances each day.

Education reformers, Ehrenhalt concludes, "must be able to show that the negative effects of taking children out of their familiar neighborhoods and sending them on long, tedious bus rides to strange surroundings are overridden by the educational benefits they receive when they reach their destination."

## Chinese schools: A model for the world?

The *Wall Street Journal* last week published an astounding graphic of urban-rural school enrollment in China by grade level. The data is from various official sources. Assuming the WSJ numbers are correct, only 6% of rural Chinese students enroll in high school and only 3% graduate. Even in urban areas, only 63% enroll in high school.

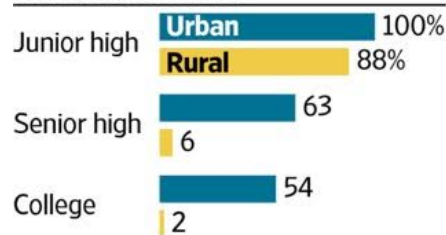
Back-of-the envelope calculations based on the *Wall Street Journal* data suggest that a 60-40 rural-urban mix of student residence means that no more than 30% of all Chinese students enroll or graduate from high school.

It is hard to understand why the Organization for Economic Collaboration and Development, the sponsor of the Program on International Student Assessment (PISA), thinks the United States

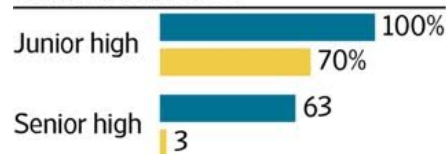
### Out of School

Education levels in China's villages lag far behind those in its cities.

#### Enrollment rates



#### Graduation rates\*



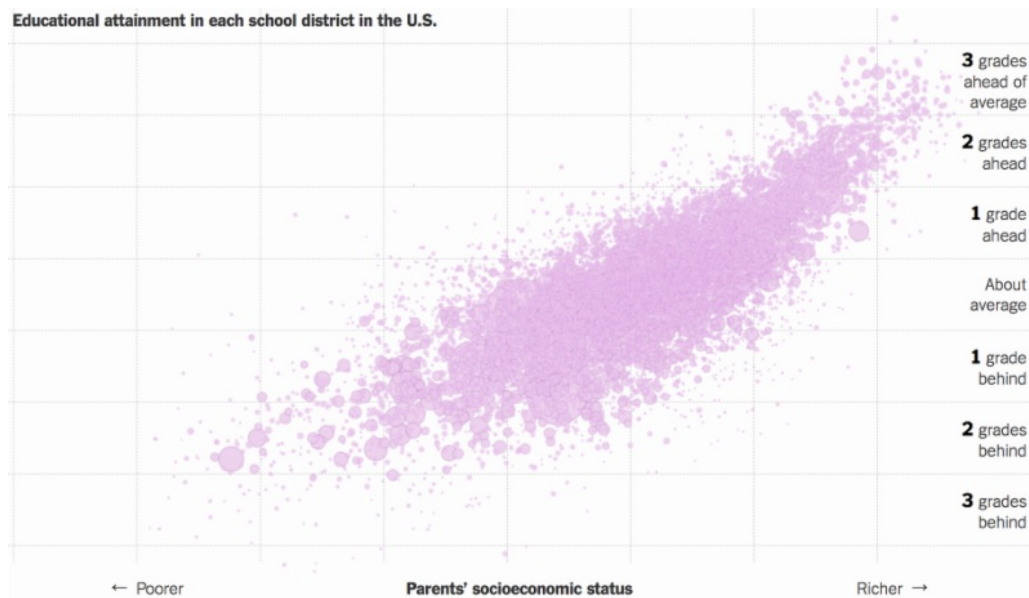
\*College graduation rate data not available  
Note: Based on national average data from 2010 to 2012, the most recent data available.  
Source: 2015 Asian Development Bank; Ministry of Education; China Education Statistical Yearbook

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

has anything to learn from Shanghai's PISA results.

## Nation's shame

Anyone paying attention has long known about funding differences in American schools, but the sheer scale of inequity is surprising. District per-pupil spending ranges at the margins from around \$6,500 to more than \$40,00 in 2013, according to a [recent analysis released by National Public Radio](#). The average was \$11,841. In a nation intent on equality of outcomes, these inequalities at the starting gate are difficult to accept. The per-pupil expenditure level of every district in the nation is available at the link above.



Equally stunning is the following data point from an [April Stanford University analysis](#): 6th graders in the richest districts in the United States are four grade levels ahead of those in the poorest.

## Toxic stress and the developing child's brain

The Roundtable's Iceberg Effect stressed the toxic effect of stress on the child's developing brain. Now a [new report](#) describes life for some children in poverty as akin to "playing football without a helmet." Epigenetic changes - non-genetic influences on gene expression - can physically change the brains of children exposed to high or chronic levels of stress, damaging their ability to learn.

*The Iceberg Effect's* concerns about violence actually understated the extent of the problem. [Gunfire in urban and rural America is more](#)



common than earlier understood. Brookings Institution researchers Jennifer Doleac and Jillian Carr used data from ShotSpotter - a technology that identifies the sound of gunshots and pinpoints their location through triangulation, removing reliance on police reports - to calculate a more accurate count of gunfire. In many areas, urban and rural, gunfire does not result in a call to the police, suggesting an under-reporting of gun violence.

## High school football beginning to raise eyebrows



**Speaking of playing football without a helmet, the new understanding of the relationship** between football and serious brain damage, in the form of development of chronic traumatic encephalopathy among former professional athletes, is leading experts to worry that high school athletes in contact sports are not properly

protected. However, CTE is not the only danger to student athletes. Cardiac arrest and heatstroke are two of the primary dangers faced by students. Unfortunately, [many states have not enacted needed safety measures for school athletics](#), and many do not have physical trainers or automated external defibrillators (AEDs) on hand during events.

Meanwhile, in Texas, [\\$50 and \\$60 million high school stadiums are raising eyebrows](#). Supporters say the costs are justified by the popularity of the events and the importance of football in Texas. But critics ask why that money isn't being spent on academics.



**A planned high school stadium in McKinney, Texas**

## Paddling legal in Georgia

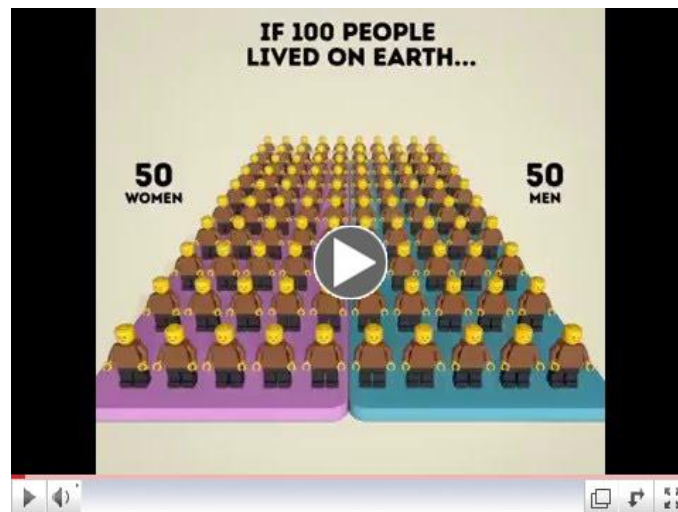
**Earlier the Roundtable called out an egregious case of an adult bullying and humiliation of a child** in one of Eva Moskowitz's charter schools in New York City.

An even more disturbing [video has emerged](#) of a public elementary school principal and assistant principal threatening a mother with jail if she interfered while they paddled her terrified five-year old. Paddling is apparently legal in Georgia, but it's morally repugnant. Responsible educators must speak up against it.



## If the world were made up of just 100 people . . .

Here's a visual representation, based on population data from the CIA's World Factbook:



## Roundtable's 2016 Semi-Annual Meetings

**Getting Organized to Help Kids** -- The Roundtable's "Iceberg effect" report indicates that the U.S. has the largest proportion of low-income children in the developed world. They live with remarkably high levels of stress and little support for families. This July 15-17 meeting will gather near Union Square to foster greater collaboration with units of general purpose local government.



**School Governance** -- October 7 -9 will find the Roundtable in Washington,

D.C., to examine school governance. What do superintendents, boards, and unions need to do to get their act together to improve outcomes for students? The meeting will be held near the national capital's historic Rock Creek Park.



## New Members

**We are pleased to note several new members who have joined the Roundtable for 2016. They include:**

- Jeffrey Baier, Los Altos, California
- Yvonne Caamal Canul, Lansing, Michigan
- Charles Dumais, Woodbridge, Connecticut
- John D. Ewald, Caroline County, Maryland
- Mary Kay Going, Moreland, California
- David Hicks, Sherman, Texas
- Jessica Huizenga, Southbridge, Massachusetts
- Laura Kagy, Attica, Ohio
- Salah Khelifaoui, Lowell, Massachusetts
- John Kopicki, Altoona, Pennsylvania (new assignment)
- Robert Kravitz, Englewood, New Jersey
- Tim Mains, Jamestown, New York
- Tammy Mangus, Monticello, New York
- Ralph Marino, Jr., Hewlett-Woodmere, New York (new assignment)
- Thomas McMorran, Easton-Redding, Connecticut
- Mark Miller, Dillonville, Ohio
- Thomas Parker, Ecorse, Michigan
- Alan Peterson, Merced, California
- Elizabeth Polito, Woodside, California
- John Ramirez, Salinas, California
- Theresa Rouse, Joliet PSD-86, Illinois (new assignment)
- Sarah Shubel, East Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Kathleen Smith, Brockton, Massachusetts
- Rick Stout, Jacksonville, North Carolina
- Julie Vitale, Romoland, California
- Matthew Wendt, Oswego, Illinois
- Nikki Woodson, Indianapolis, Indiana
- Paul Zinni, Avon, Massachusetts

Welcome!

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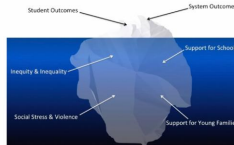
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## School Performance in Context: Indicators of School Inputs and Outputs in Nine Similar Nations



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**Iceberg Effect Report**  
Free downloads or purchase copies [here](#).



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