



# Engaging Families

*Supporting Students from Cradle to Career*

Volume III, Issue 2

Fall 2013

## Back-to-School Bus Tour



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#### Family Engagement Team

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and senior ED officials began the fourth back-to-school bus tour Sept. 9. The tour from Sept. 9-12, themed *Strong Start, Bright Future*, will visit [states](#) throughout the Southwest with stops in the following cities: Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Socorro, and Columbus, New Mexico; Tucson, Tempe, Scottsdale, Yuma, and Phoenix, Arizona; El Paso, Texas; and Chula Vista, California. The [tour](#) will highlight the importance of ensuring that all students benefit from high-quality educational opportunities, including [Preschool for All](#), [college affordability](#), [ConnectED](#), [first-term education efforts](#), and comprehensive immigration reform's impact on education.

Last year, the Department's tour took staff [coast to coast](#), in 2011, the tour [rolled through the Midwest](#), and in 2010, Duncan and his team visited the [South and the Northeast](#).

Sign up to receive [Strong Start, Bright Future](#) tour updates.

Here are four ways to stay digitally connected to the tour:

1) **Twitter**

Follow hashtag [#edtour13](#) for the latest and keep up to date by following [@usedgov](#) and [@arneduncan](#).

2) **Email Updates**

[Sign up here](#) to get the latest from the road in your inbox.

3) **Storify**

Subscribe to our Storify page and read our collection of stories and photos from the road.

4) **Blog**

We'll be blogging throughout the tour. Visit [ed.gov/bustour](http://ed.gov/bustour) or sign up for email updates from our Homeroom Blog.

### **The President's Plan to Make College More Affordable**

[President Obama outlined an ambitious new agenda](#) to combat rising college costs and make college affordable for American families. His [plan](#) will measure college performance through a new ratings system so students and families have the information to select schools that provide the best value. After this ratings system is well established, Congress can tie federal student aid to college performance so that students maximize their federal aid at institutions providing the best value. The President's plan will also take down barriers that stand in the way of competition and innovation, particularly in the use of new technology, and shine a light on the most cutting-edge college practices for providing high value at low costs. To help student borrowers struggling with their existing debt, the President is committed to ensuring that all borrowers who need it can have access to the Pay As You Earn plan that caps loan payments at 10 percent of income and is directing the Department of Education to ramp up its efforts to reach out to students struggling with their loans to make sure they know and understand all their repayment options. To learn more, [click here](#).

## **Other News and Events**

### **The Affordable Care Act**

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) is a United States federal statute signed into law by President Barack Obama on Mar. 23, 2010. ACA aims to increase the quality and affordability of health insurance, lower the uninsured rate by expanding public and private insurance coverage, and reduce the costs of health care for individuals and the government. The law also requires insurance companies to cover all applicants within new minimum standards and offer the same rates regardless of pre-existing conditions or sex. To learn more visit the following websites, <http://marketplace.cms.gov/getofficialresources/other-partner-resources/what-it-means-for-parents-and-teachers.pdf> and <https://www.healthcare.gov/>.

### **Webinars Offered on the Health Care Law**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Partnership Center is hosting a series of webinars for faith and community leaders. The webinars provide information about the main provisions in the health care law (the Affordable Care Act) and how to access care in their communities. Topics include the Health Insurance Marketplace, how to enroll in health insurance, and how to receive updates on implementation of the law. All webinars are one hour. The webinars are open to the public and include a question and answer session. Webinars are offered in English and Spanish. For more information, please email [ACA101@hhs.gov](mailto:ACA101@hhs.gov)



### **Region 8 Federal Partners hosting Violence Prevention Webinar**

The Importance of Healthy Communication and Relationships will be discussed as part of the 2013 Webinar Series: *Improving the Health of Communities through the National Prevention Strategy*. The Sept. 19 session from 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm, MT, will highlight federal programs and resources that help to prevent violence through a focus on creating safe and healthy environments in schools, anti-bullying efforts, healthy relationships and communication. Featured speakers include David Esquith, Director of the Office for Safe and Healthy Students, U.S. Department of Education; Rear Admiral Zachary Taylor, MD, MS, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, Region VIII, U. S. Department of Health and Human Services; and Joneen Mackenzie, President/Founder of the Center for Relationship Education. To register, use this link:

<https://www.colorado.feb.gov/index.php?content=82&page=NationalPreventionStrategy>

## **Effective Parent Programs**

### **"Staying in the Green: A Stoplight Study Skills Program"**

Liberty Elementary School, in Omaha, NB, has developed and implemented a study skills curriculum called "Staying in the Green: A Stoplight Study Skills Program." Each student from Head Start and prekindergarten through sixth grade has an assignment notebook that goes home each day. The teacher sends a note daily about the student's academic and social progress and how well the child listened. With this simple and inexpensive communication tool, parents are aware each day of their child's success, possible teacher concerns, and other school-related topics, such as field trips. Liberty also has before- and after-school programs that use the same study skill program so that parents are informed as to how their child is doing from the moment her or she leaves home until they returning in the afternoon. Parents sign the notebook and return it to school. Understanding that many parents are working long hours, and that many parents do not speak English, this tool is kept simple so that each parent can be aware of their child's success. Liberty students learn that school is their job and they must come to school on time each day, do all their work, turn the work in to their teacher, follow Liberty's rules, and do what the teacher asks the first time. Liberty's program is unique in that it is based on positive actions and empowers the students to own their behavior. The program teaches listening and study skills in a way that makes them easy to understand. There are clear expectations for students, many of whom are English learners. The program also provides consistency across classrooms and grade levels. The most important part of this program is the communication between families and school. Liberty has a 98 percent daily participation with this communication tool. With the method there are no surprises at report card conferences. For more information, call Mrs. Di Masi, the elementary counselor who developed the program, at 402-898-1967 or email her at [Cecilia.dimasi@ops.org](mailto:Cecilia.dimasi@ops.org)

### ***Students, Teachers, Educators, and Parents United for a Purpose! (S.T.E.P. U.P.)***

To help parents become more involved in their child's education on every level a group of concerned parents, legislators, and school officials began [\*Students, Teachers, Educators, and Parents United for a Purpose! \(S.T.E.P. U.P.\)\*](#). With the understanding that it takes everyone to help students succeed teachers, school administrators, parents, and the community began to work together. An [online parental involvement self-assessment](#) was also developed to help parents/guardians gauge their level of involvement in their child's education. Detailed information of what parental involvement entails and [resources](#) based on outcome of the assessment are provided to help strengthen parenting skills. Parents then are able to provide educational assistance to their children. For more information about S.T.E.P. U.P., contact Ms. Alexandria Briggs-Blake, Chair at [stepup4children@yahoo.com](mailto:stepup4children@yahoo.com) or Mr. Eric Jackson, Co-chair, [ericseanjackson@hotmail.com](mailto:ericseanjackson@hotmail.com).

## **Resources**

### **Use Digital Resources to Stay Informed**

Be informed and a resource to others. Keep up with all that the U. S. Department of Education (ED) is doing. To remain informed use the following digital resources that are offered by ED:

#### **Blog**

View daily blogs:

[www.ed.gov/blog](http://www.ed.gov/blog)

Get an email when a blog is posted:

- Link: [https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USED/subscriber/new?topic\\_id=USED\\_6](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USED/subscriber/new?topic_id=USED_6)
- Shortened Link: <http://bit.ly/159Fznu>



#### **Social Media**

All of ED's accounts:

<http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/social-media.html>

Get a daily email of tweets from ED and Arne (you don't need to join Twitter)

- Link: [https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USED/subscriber/new?topic\\_id=USED\\_40](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USED/subscriber/new?topic_id=USED_40)
- Shortened Link: <http://bit.ly/19JmDQN>

#### **Press Office**

Subscribe to the following emails to receive the following communications from the Department:

- [Press Releases](#)
- [Media Advisories](#) (sent all together at the end of the day)
- [Speeches](#)

## Mark September as Attendance Awareness Month

Recognize September as [Attendance Awareness Month](#). Research has shown that chronic absenteeism in school is linked to low performance. To raise awareness about the importance of attendance, a [toolkit](#), *Count Us In!*. This toolkit has been developed to provide communities, schools, parents, and families with information and tools about how they can get involved to improve attendance. To learn more go to <http://www.attendanceworks.org/attendancemonth/>.

## Family Engagement Outreach Team

The Office of Communications and Outreach contacts work with state and local education agencies to empower parents with the information to help them be full partners in the education and academic progress of their children.

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