



In Case You Missed It: Echoing Governor Christie's Education Reforms...

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Gates Urges School Budget Overhauls

By Sam Dillon

New York Times

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Bill Gates, the founder and former chairman of Microsoft, has made education-related philanthropy a major focus since stepping down from his day-to-day role in the company in 2008.

His new area of interest: helping solve schools' money problems. In a speech on Friday, Mr. Gates — who is gaining considerable clout in education circles — plans to urge the 50 state superintendents of education to take difficult steps to restructure the nation's public education budgets, which have come under severe pressure in the economic downturn.

He suggests they end teacher pay increases based on seniority and on master's degrees, which he says are unrelated to teachers' ability to raise student achievement. He also urges an end to efforts to reduce class sizes. Instead, he suggests rewarding the most effective teachers with higher pay for taking on larger classes or teaching in needy schools.

"Of course, restructuring pay systems is like kicking a beehive" — but restructure them anyway, Mr. Gates plans to tell the superintendents in his talk to the Council of Chief State School Officers, which opens a convention in Louisville on Friday.

"Rebuild the budget based on excellence," Mr. Gates says.

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New Jersey, for example, faces a \$10 billion deficit, and Gov. Chris Christie has clashed with superintendents over his efforts to cap their pay.

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Secretary of Education Arne Duncan delivered his own speech in Washington this week, titled "Bang for the Buck in Schooling," in which he made arguments similar to those of Mr. Gates.

School officials should be using this crisis to "leverage transformational change in the education system" rather than seeking to balance budgets through shorter school years, reduced bus routes or other short-term fixes, Mr. Duncan said.

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In the speech, Mr. Gates says that improving student achievement is a central challenge, and that budget crises are making change necessary.

"You can't fund reforms without money," he says. "And there is no more money."

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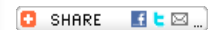
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