



## Lawmakers Look to Revamp No Child Left Behind

Senators are struggling to balance the need for accountability with the burden of testing.

By Allie Bidwell

While K-12 education issues were noticeably absent from President Barack Obama's State of the Union address, they were front and center the following morning as Senate lawmakers began tackling the daunting rewrite of the No Child Left Behind act.



The sweeping education law has been overdue for an update for eight years, and has become so divisive that Congress has been unable to compromise on what needs to change, primarily disagreeing on the federal government’s role in overseeing school quality and how and when students should be tested. Republican Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, chairman of the Senate education committee, said during a hearing on efforts to revamp the law that both the Senate and House hope to have bills doing so on the floor by the end of February.

“I know members of this committee must be tired of hearing me talk until I am blue in the face about a ‘national school board,’” Alexander said in opening remarks before his committee. “I know it is tempting to try to fix classrooms from Washington.”

Both Alexander and Democratic Sen. Patty Murray of Washington, the committee’s ranking minority member, laid out their priorities for what they’d like to see in a reauthorization bill. For Alexander, a significantly scaled-back federal role is important, and he’s suggested giving states much more leeway on testing. Another path he’s put forward for discussion in a draft bill is to keep the testing laws exactly as they are now—a move that’s unlikely to gain favor from either side of the aisle.

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Murray has been adamant about the need for annual assessments to ensure that disadvantaged students don’t “fall through the cracks.”

“The law set unrealistic goals for schools across the country, and then failed to give them the resources they needed to succeed,” Murray said. “But we can’t turn our back on measuring students’ progress or simply let schools and states off the hook for failing to provide a quality education to all students.”

Education Secretary Arne Duncan also has held strong to the notion that students need to be assessed in some



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way each year, although he's hinted he may be open to compromise around the types of tests used by states and school districts. Like Senate Democrats, Duncan said during a speech last Monday that he also wants to give states the flexibility to eliminate duplicative tests and the funds to improve the annual exams they do keep.

"The 'crux of the debate' will hinge on the number and types of tests students take, as well as the consequences tied to the results of those exams," says Terrell Halaska, a former assistant secretary of education under President George W. Bush.

"It's telling that Alexander's draft leaves that question open," says Halaska, now a founding partner of consulting firm HCM Strategists. "It puts two options in there and that's what the hearing is designed to address."

"It will also be important to pay attention to people's focus in pushing certain testing options," Halaska says.

"Is it about improving outcomes or making it easier for adults to do jobs?" Halaska says. "That's a big distinction... that sometimes gets lost in the debate. It's a lot easier to do your job if no one's [looking at you]."

Two bills related to testing are also percolating in the House. One bill, reintroduced Tuesday by Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, D-OR, would give states federal grants to reduce unnecessary testing. Another—introduced Wednesday by Reps. Chris Gibson, R-NY, and Kyrsten Sinema, D-AZ—would replace federal requirements that students be tested in English and math once each year in third through eighth grade, and that they be tested in those subjects once in high school. Instead, students would be tested just once in elementary, middle, and high school, as they currently are in science.

Much of the Senate committee's discussion centered around a struggle to find a balance between main-

taining the elements of the No Child Left Behind act that have improved student outcomes and increased knowledge about educational progress with the need to make testing requirements less burdensome for schools, teachers, and students.

Stephen Lazar, a high school history and English teacher at Harvest Collegiate High School in New York City, said that a benefit to the testing structure is the fact that exams can be issued quarterly, so teachers are receiving information on their students' performance throughout the year, rather than in the last few weeks of the school year. While he said it's necessary for Congress to adjust testing requirements, Lazar said that a stance against any requirement for testing is "misguided."

"We need to track how well our schools are serving our students with the greatest needs.... But the current NCLB regimen of annual high-stakes standardized exams provides only crude and inadequate measures of student achievement," he said.

Jia Lee, a teacher at the Earth School in New York City, took a somewhat stronger stance in opposition to standardized testing during her testimony.

"Multiple-choice, high-stakes tests," Lee said, "have reliably padded the profits of education corporations, draining public tax dollars, but have been unreliable in measuring the diversity of students' capabilities and learning."

"We need future generations to explore problems that have far more complex solutions than a multiple-choice test," Lee said. ■

Read the full article at [usnews.com](http://usnews.com).

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# Celebrate Open Education Week with AAE March 9–13

**O**pen Education is, at its core, about free and open sharing. Free, meaning no cost, and open, which refers to the use of legal tools (open licenses) that allow everyone to reuse and modify educational resources. Free and open sharing increases access to education and knowledge for everyone, everywhere, all the time. It allows people to make changes to materials or to combine resources to build something new. Open Education incorporates free and open learning communities, educational networks, teaching and learning materials, textbooks, data, scholarship, source educational tools and more. Open Education gives people access to knowledge, provides platforms for sharing, enables innovation, and connects communities of learners and educators around the world.

## What is Open Education Week?

Open Education Week's goal is to raise awareness about free and open educational opportunities that exist for everyone, everywhere, right now. We want to highlight how open education can help people meet their goals in education, whether that's to develop skills and knowledge for work, supporting formal studies, learning something new for personal interest, or looking for additional teaching resources.

## Why is Open Education important?

People want to learn. By providing free and open access to education and knowledge, we help create a world where people can fulfill this desire. Students can get additional information, viewpoints, and materials to help them succeed. Faculty can draw on resources from all around the world. Teachers can find new ways to help students learn. People can connect with others they wouldn't otherwise meet to share ideas and information. Materials can be translated, mixed together, broken apart and openly shared again, increasing access and inviting fresh approaches. Anyone can access educational materials, scholarly articles, and supportive learning communities anytime they want. Education is available, accessible, modifiable, and free.

## How does Open Education affect me?

The idea of free and open sharing in education is not new. In fact, sharing is probably the most basic characteristic of education: education is sharing knowledge, insights, and information with others, upon which new knowledge, skills, ideas, and understanding can be built. Open Education seeks to scale up educational opportunities by taking advantage of the power of the Internet, allowing rapid and essentially free dissemination, and enabling people around the world to access knowledge, connect, and collaborate. Open is key; open not only allows access, but also the freedom to modify and use materials, information, and networks so education can be personalized to individual users or woven together in new ways for diverse audiences, large and small. ■

To learn more, visit [openeducationweek.org](http://openeducationweek.org).



# St. Patrick's Day Lesson Ideas from AAE

## Art

### Blarney Stone

Let the children paint a rock as they desire. When the rock is dry, parents can use it as a paperweight.

### Leprechaun Foot Prints

Obtain a very long piece of white paper about six feet long. Then have each child walk across the paper after a teacher has painted their feet various shades of green.

### Ireland Flag

Have the children make Ireland flags with red, green, and white construction paper and a straw for the flagpole.

## Foods and Snacks

### Cereal Rainbows

You will need a box of Fruit Loops (or similar cereal), paper, pencil, and glue. For younger children, you should draw a rainbow shape onto the paper, then have the children glue the Fruit Loops inside the shape. Older children can make their own rainbow shape, or trace it. You may also do this project as open-ended art by allowing the children to make whatever they wish with the Fruit Loops.

### Make It Green

You can add green (or blue and yellow) food coloring to whipped cream, sprite, milk, white grape juice, rice, noodles, cream cheese, sugar cookie dough, muffin, bread dough, or oobleck to add a little excitement to the St. Patrick's Day snacks.

## Games and Activities

### Shamrock Search

Cut out one shamrock shape. Hide it in the room. Have a chair in the center of the room. The children should look for the shamrock. The first child to find it takes the shamrock and sits in the chair. The other children cover their eyes, and the child hides the shamrock in a new place, and the process is restarted.

### Clovers

Grow clovers in the classroom from seeds or transplant some from outside.

### Green Day

Send a letter home, asking the parents to dress the children in green clothing on a certain day.

### Paper Maché Pot of Gold

Inflate a large balloon and tape 3 sections of an egg carton to the bottom in a triangle shape so the pot will stand on its own. Use paper maché to cover 1/2 of the balloon and the egg carton feet. When dry, paint the paper maché black or rainbow colors. You can decorate with stickers or gold glitter as well. You can fill the pot with gold chocolate coins. When you are outside, have someone hide the chocolate coins and leave leprechaun foot prints behind. The children can then search the room for the coins. ■



# Stay on the Cutting Edge: Join Skype in the Classroom

**R**oughly 90% of schools don't teach computer science. Yet, it is estimated that one million computer science jobs will go unfilled every year!

To change that, Skype in the Classroom is partnering with **Code.org** to get kids excited about computer science careers by connecting them with experts who design the tech products they use every day.

Teachers can sign up for the program to get their classrooms paired with coders, developers, program managers, product designers, and other professionals. These guest

speakers will talk about their daily responsibilities, how they found their way into the tech field, and why they love their jobs.

**Please share these links with your readers so their students are on track to fill those one million tech jobs:**

- This video will give you a sneak peak at this brand new program: [youtube.com/watch?v=m0q\\_Cm87n3U&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0q_Cm87n3U&feature=youtu.be)
- Link for teachers to sign up: [education.skype.com/computerscience](https://education.skype.com/computerscience)

The program supports the 2014 Hour of Code, but teachers and tech professionals will continue the conversation throughout the school year through Skype in the Classroom. ■



## Be PROTECTED: Prepare Your School to Handle Life-Threatening Allergic Reactions

**E**mergency plans such as fire and security drills are standard procedures in many school districts. But these days, many school communities are also asking themselves if they're prepared to handle a child experiencing a life-threatening allergic reaction (anaphylaxis).

Here's why:

- An estimated one in 13 U.S. children have food allergies that could cause anaphylaxis.
- A recent survey evaluating anaphylaxis and the use of epinephrine auto-injectors in U.S. schools during the 2013-2014 academic year found that, of 919 reported cases of anaphylaxis, more than 20% occurred in the absence of an established or known allergic trigger. The survey was conducted among more than 6,000 schools.
- A recent trend in legislation surrounding school access to epinephrine has resulted in 45 states enacting laws or policies allowing or requiring schools to stock epinephrine auto-injectors used to deliver epinephrine, as first-line treatment in all cases of anaphylaxis.

To help schools be better prepared to respond to anaphylaxis, Mylan Specialty is expanding its free resource offerings through the EpiPen4Schools program; which now includes:

- Four free EpiPen® (epinephrine) or EpiPen Jr® (epinephrine) Auto-Injectors
- New anaphylaxis training video for school nurses and designated staff
- An EpiPen® Trainer that contains no drug product or needle, designed to practice administration technique
- EpiLocker™ in which to store EpiPen and EpiPen Jr Auto-Injectors
- Replenishment offer for qualifying schools that use the free supply of EpiPen or EpiPen Jr Auto-Injectors to respond to anaphylaxis
- Online ordering

Talk to your healthcare professional to see if EpiPen or EpiPen Jr Auto-Injector is right for you. Learn more by visiting [EpiPen4Schools.com](https://EpiPen4Schools.com)! ■



# Crossword for Cash

Complete this puzzle and email the results to [Alana@aaeteachers.org](mailto:Alana@aaeteachers.org). All correct entries received by the 15th will be entered into an Amazon gift card raffle! HINT: All answers can be found scattered across this month's newsletter. So keep your eyes peeled!

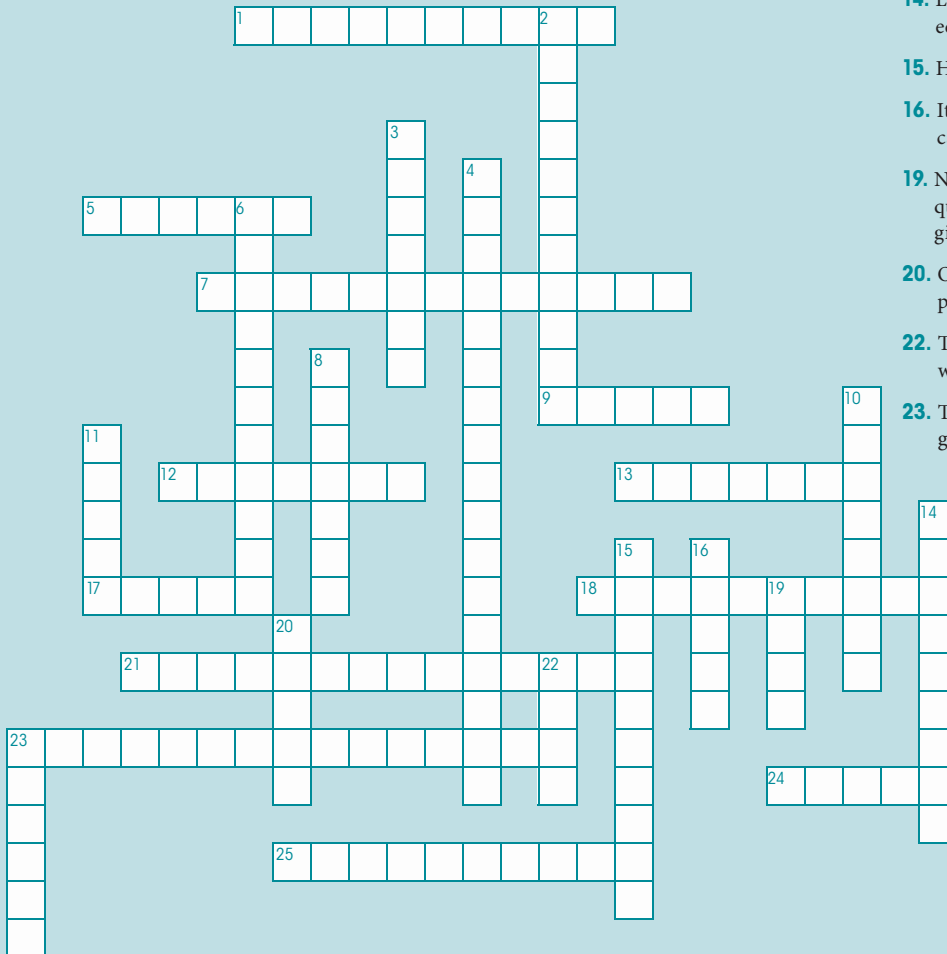
Some answers are comprised of more than one word. In all such cases, no boxes are included to account for the space between words.

## ACROSS

1. This company produces productivity apps for the workplace.
5. Last name of the Senate education committees ranking minority member.
7. The discount code you need to receive a 30-day free trial and a 20% discount on RedCriticr.
9. The name of the NYC school where Jia Lee is a teacher.
12. According to legend, kissing this stone will bless you with the gift of the gab.
13. Last name of the assistant secretary of education under President G. W. Bush.
17. Teachers may be eligible for forgiveness of up to \$17,500 on their what?
18. The Skype in the Classroom program supported what 2014 computer science celebration?
21. Mylan specialty is expanding their free resource offerings through this program.
23. It is estimated that one million of these jobs go unfilled every year.
24. Who partnered with Code.org to get kids excited about computer science careers?
25. If ever captured, this creature has the magical power to grant three wishes in exchange for their release.

## DOWN

2. Auto-injectors are used to deliver what?
3. St. Patrick's Day originated in what country?
4. What does NCLB stand for?
6. A life-threatening allergic reaction.
8. It is said that a pot of gold is hidden at the end of a what?
10. This low-growing, clover-like plant with three-lobed leaves, is used as the national emblem of Ireland.
11. Open sharing refers to the use of \_\_\_\_\_ tools that allow everyone to reuse and modify educational resources.
14. Last name of the chairman of the Senate education committee.
15. HCM Strategists is what kind of firm?
16. It's not easy being this color. But you can make it using blue and yellow!
19. Number of years you must teach to qualify for the College Loan Debt Forgiveness Program?
20. Open education is important because people want to \_\_\_\_\_.
22. The week of March 9-13 celebrates what kind of education?
23. The four-leafed plant thought to bring good luck to the eyes who find it.





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Presorted Standard  
 US Postage Paid  
 #400  
 Laguna Niguel, CA

Education Matters is a publication of  
 the Association of American Educators Foundation (AAEF)

aaeteachers.org • editor@aaeteachers.org • 800.704.7799

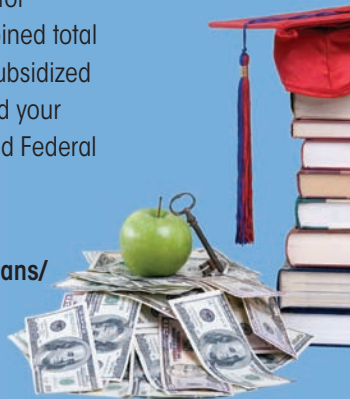
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## Save Money: College Loan Debt Forgiveness Program

Teachers... have you heard about the College Loan Debt Forgiveness Program? Did you know that you could have student loan debt forgiven after teaching five complete and consecutive academic years?

In fact, you may be eligible for forgiveness of up to a combined total of \$17,500 on your Direct Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans and your Subsidized and Unsubsidized Federal Stafford Loans.

To learn more, visit  
[studentaid.ed.gov/repay-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/charts/teacher](http://studentaid.ed.gov/repay-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/charts/teacher).



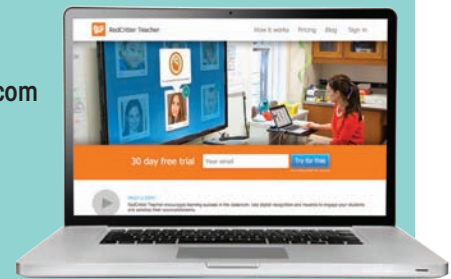
## Teach with this Special Member-Only Offer!

RedCrittter is a company that produces productivity apps for the workplace. Their new classroom management app just launched last month, and includes features such as badging, in-depth student reports, facilitated communication, and instant feedback.

And they're offering AAE teachers a special 20% discount when they complete their 30-day FREE trial!

To redeem this special offer, visit them at [redcrittterteacher.com?pc=AAETEACHERS20](http://redcrittterteacher.com?pc=AAETEACHERS20) and use discount code: **AAETEACHERS20!**

Visit [redcrittterteacher.com](http://redcrittterteacher.com) for more information.



## Answers for the February Crossword

### ACROSS

- Apple, 5. Pet, 9. Incoming, 10. Paycheck, 11. Blended Learning, 13. Ninety Four, 16. Disability Income Protection, 19. AAETeachers, 20. Michele Linch, 22. Fifty, 23. Common Core, 24. Mission Viejo, 25. Personal Auto

### DOWN

- Louisiana, 3. Term Life, 4. School Choice, 6. Office Depot, 7. Religious Objector, 8. KANAEE, 12. Union, 14. NWPE, 15. Four, 17. ID Theft Assist, 18. Performance, 21. Contracts

AAETEACHERS20  
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 Blarney  
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 Epinephrine  
 EpipensSchools  
 Five  
 Green  
 Halaska  
 HourOfCode  
 Ireland  
 RedCrittter  
 Shamrock  
 Skype  
 Leprechann  
 Legal  
 Learn  
 NoChildLeftBehind  
 Murray  
 Loans

WORD BANK FOR MARCH CROSSWORD