

Summer stories: Take stock, look ahead, dig into data



Linda Shaw, Education Lab editor, The Seattle Times

The usual suspects



Summertime topics:

- School district budgets
- School board elections
- Test score release
- Teacher contract negotiations

Dig into data



Good time to analyze new data

- Teacher absenteeism
- Ninth-grade course failure
- College-going rates by region/district

Take stock

Is friction driving out Seattle school superintendents?

By [John Higgins](#) Seattle Times education reporter

Just days before Seattle school Superintendent José Banda interviewed with the Sacramento School Board for its top job, he sent a blistering email to his own board members about their treatment of his staff over the selection of new elementary-school math textbooks.

Banda and his staff wanted the same textbook that a review committee had recommended. But four of the seven board members had pushed for — and ultimately got — a different math book, and it was their exchanges with Banda's staff leading up to that choice that prompted his email, which was sent on the eve of the board's vote.

"Over the past few weeks my staff's professionalism and ethics have been called into question," Banda wrote in the June 3 email. "Assertions have also been made implying the process was fixed or slanted toward a certain result. More troubling still, one senior staff person's integrity has been called into question so consistently that I feel it borders on defamation."

-- Assess what superintendent has done; challenges ahead

-- Assess job school board is doing

-- Look at record of charter schools/magnets

What's happening in Pre-K



Lots of district special programs for incoming kindergartners, where students spend a week or two in school before it officially starts. If happening in your districts, what's the evidence that they're helpful?

What's happening in Pre-K

'Its just math': Preschoolers can do more than we might think'

By [John Higgins](#) /Seattle Times staff reporter

On a recent morning in South Seattle, Kristin Alfonzo challenged her preschoolers to make the number 7 using beads strung across two rows of pipe cleaners.

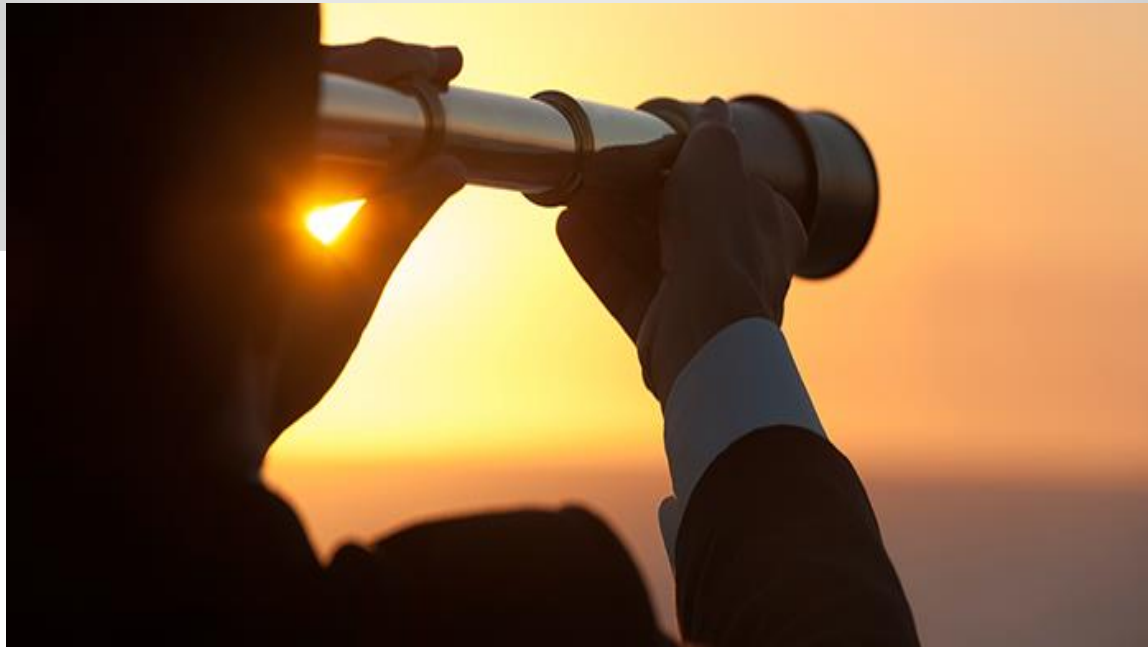
One 5-year-old boy slid four beads across the top and three across the bottom. Another did the reverse, and one kid pushed all seven on one row.

"I see many different ways of making 7!" Alfonzo said over the ruckus of kids counting out loud.

Preschools typically leave math for grade school, in the belief that 4- and 5-year-olds aren't old enough to understand what 7 stands for. Decades of brain science now show that waiting is a mistake.



Look ahead



New challenges for Dreamers



-- Are they having hard time getting status renewed?

-- Are they having trouble getting jobs after graduation?

Teachers and the new federal politics



-- Are some of your teachers getting training to help them support immigrant students and their families?

New ways to judge schools



Under the new federal education act (ESSA), each state will have a lot of leeway in deciding how to judge school and district performance. How is your state defining school quality?

Have some fun

Round II: Another top teacher explains more of jargon you hate

By [Linda Shaw](#)



In our quest to illuminate some of the education jargon you've said confuses and confounds you, today we offer plain-spoken definitions of five more terms, provided by [National Board Certified teacher](#) Spencer Olmsted from Olympia. Thanks, Spencer!

He follows Mark Gardner, a Camas high-school teacher (also nationally certified) who [tackled](#) three terms last week.

Both Olmsted and Gardner write for the [Stories from School](#) blog, a project of the [Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession](#), a Washington nonprofit.

He chose to define manipulatives, formative assessment, constructivist, scaffolding and number sentence.

Here's Olmsted:

Formative Assessment: Formative assessments are measures teachers make in the process of teaching that help them make decisions about instruction. By assessing where students are during a lesson or unit, teachers can make adjustments to suit individual student or small-group needs. Formative assessments are like little checkpoints on the road map, whereas summative assessments tell us whether or not we have reached our destination.

-- Ask readers to suggest/vote on terms they'd like to understand better; ask teachers to provide definitions.