

GED about to get more rigorous

By Motoko Rich, New York Times

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – The high school equivalency exams taken by people who dropped out of school and immigrants seeking a foothold in the American education system are about to get harder and potentially more expensive, causing concern that fewer will take and pass the exams.

At a time when a high school diploma – much less an equivalency certificate – is losing currency in the labor market, exams being introduced in January will start to be aligned with the Common Core, a set of rigorous academic standards for kindergarten through 12th grade that 45 states and the District of Columbia have adopted.

In an echo of the debate surrounding the standards in elementary and secondary education, instructors and officials at adult education centers worry that increasing complexity could demoralize a population that already struggles to pass the current test, commonly known as the GED.

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Study: Income, access to family planning tied together

By Daniel Lippman, Wall Street Journal

Increased access to family planning programs is linked to

higher incomes and better college completion later in life, according to new research.

“Cheaper and more reliable contraception reduces the immediate and expected costs of delaying childbearing, freeing up resources in the parents’ human capital,” according to the new working paper by University of Michigan economist Martha Bailey. Such a delay allows “soon-to-be parents to get more education, work experience, and job training, and thus increase their lifetime earnings.”

Before the Supreme Court’s 1965 case *Griswold v. Connecticut*, a number of states had banned the sale of contraception. The paper, which primarily used data from the 2000 Census and the 2005-2011 American Community Survey, found that children conceived in areas that had higher legal or financial access to the birth-control pill were associated with a 2-3 percent increase in income when they were adults. Children in these areas also had a 2-7 percent higher chance of finishing college.

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Assault victim recovering, memory not clear

By Kathryn Reed

The South Lake Tahoe woman who was beaten by an unknown assailant continues to recover from her injuries.

The victim, who is in her 30s and whose name is not being published, was hit in the head several times, sustained

defensive wounds and a severe concussion.

El Dorado County sheriff's deputies were called to Barton Memorial Hospital on Oct. 8 because the woman told hospital staff she had been assaulted near Meyers. Upon further questioning by deputies the woman said it was closer to Woodfords where a man posing as a cop pulled her over and assaulted her. That is when the investigation was turned over to Alpine County Sheriff's Department.

Now both departments are handling the investigation.

As is common with a trauma like this, the brain can become scattered and memories jumbled. It is normal with head injuries for the sequence of events to be remembered in a random manner. That is what is now happening to the victim. The victim was in Alpine County that day, but whether that is where the crime occurred is not definite.

"(An assault like this) absolutely will cause memory issues and for the brain to be so fuzzy you cannot remember exactly what happened," El Dorado County sheriff's Deputy Damian Frisby told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Frisby said that while the circumstances of the assault are not definitive, the fact remains the woman was assaulted and the assailant remains unknown, and therefore at-large.

"In no way has the victim provided us with false information," Frisby said.

He added that the scariest part is that a woman was beaten up for unknown reasons by someone who remains a mystery.

The investigation is ongoing and the woman is cooperating.

Progressive slot payouts may grow

By Cy Ryan, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – Players of progressive slot machines may see bigger jackpots in the future thanks to some companies' desire to compete with large lottery payouts in other states.

The three-member Nevada Gaming Control Board conducted a workshop Wednesday on a petition by IGT and Bally Technology to change regulations that aim at get more players to spend their money on the progressive machines.

The proposed amended regulation would allow a Nevada company with a network of progressive machines to tie the Nevada progressive machines into the slots owned by the company in other states where gambling is legal.

Read the whole story

Journalists: Obama all about secretive government

By Steven Thomma, McClatchy

WASHINGTON – Despite a promise of transparency, President Obama has run a secretive government that's chilling the flow of information to reporters while it tries to channel its version of news through its own government media, according to a new report from a journalists' group.

The report says the Obama administration has curbed the disclosure of government information, limited the use of the Freedom of Information Act, launched a program of internal surveillance to stop people from talking to reporters and conducted an unprecedented number of investigations of journalists.

The search for leaks, the report's author said, is the most aggressive since President Richard Nixon.

"In the Obama administration's Washington, government officials are increasingly afraid to talk to the press," says the report by Leonard Downie Jr. for the Committee to Protect Journalists.

"There's no question that sources are looking over their shoulders," Michael Oreskes, a senior managing editor of the Associated Press, says in the report.

Read the whole story

Brown signs bill committing Calif. to TRPA

Gov. Jerry Brown on Saturday signed Senate Bill 630, which renews California's partnership with Nevada and reaffirms the states' commitment to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's bi-state Compact.

"Today, California reaffirmed its longstanding partnership with the state of Nevada to protect and enhance the beauty of Lake Tahoe," Brown said in a statement.



Signing of SB630 ends
bickering between California
and Nevada – for now.
Photo/LTN

This legislation delivers on the commitment Brown and Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval made earlier this year to work with legislative leadership in both states to develop amendments to bills in the Nevada and California state Legislatures that repeal Nevada's planned withdrawal from the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact and California's proposal to re-establish a California Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

"Nevada and California have a long history of working together to protect Lake Tahoe and this new law ensures that legacy of collaboration will continue," Sandoval said in a press release. "Lake Tahoe truly is the Jewel of the Sierra and with the signing of this law both states can continue to ensure the protection of the environment and help enhance the economy of the region. I want to thank Governor Brown and Senator Pavley for their support and dedication to protecting the Tahoe basin."

Nevada's companion legislation, SB229, was signed by Sandoval in June.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Study: Tropics threatened by global warming

By Neela Banerjee, Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON – Polar bears and penguins are usually the first creatures that come to mind when considering the likely victims of global warming, but a new study finds that fish, coral and other inhabitants of the tropics will be the first to take the brunt of climate change.

An analysis of global temperatures over the last 150 years combined with forecasts generated by 39 independent models concludes that animals in areas closest to the equator will be forced to cope with temperatures that are outside their historical range in as little as about 15 years.

Although organisms all over the world will have to find ways to adapt to higher temperatures, animals in the tropics are particularly vulnerable, researchers said. Conditions in the tropics stay in a narrower range than in other places on the planet, so it takes a smaller shift to put creatures in peril, said biologist Eric Post, director of the Polar Center at Penn State.

Read the whole story

Calif. water officials to go after illegal pot grows

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

California water quality regulators will soon begin inspecting illegal marijuana growing operations in the Central Valley and Sierra Nevada, reversing an earlier ban intended to protect employees.

At a meeting Friday in Rancho Cordova, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board directed staff to begin cooperating with other agencies to inspect marijuana grows, which have emerged as a major source of environmental damage in many rural counties.

The board and its staff are charged with protecting streams and groundwater in the state's vast interior, a region encompassing 37 counties and 40 percent of California's land area. It also includes the western flank of the Sierra Nevada, a sparsely populated and rugged region favored by marijuana growers.

"The environmental impacts are significant," said Pamela Creedon, the water board's executive officer. "If we don't get some kind of control over this, we're going to have some serious damage being done."

Marijuana growers encompass a spectrum of individuals, from gravely ill cancer patients growing their own small supply of medicinal marijuana under the legal authority of California's Proposition 215 to undocumented immigrants working on behalf of violent multinational drug cartels.

Read the whole story

El Dorado, Placer contractors caught in sting

By Mark Glover, Sacramento Bee

Seventy-five people may face criminal charges after being caught in six simultaneous statewide undercover sting operations conducted this week by the Contractors State License Board.

Among those arrested during CSLB's fall "California Blitz" were two registered sex offenders, two individuals with multiple prior felonies, three who had an active arrest warrant and a handful of people using contractor license numbers not belonging to them.

CSLB said 13 arrests were made in Placer County and eight in El Dorado County. Other arrests were made in Fresno, Monterey, San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

[Read the whole story](#)

State money to help with roads in Tahoe region

El Dorado and Placer counties are the beneficiaries of California Transportation Commission funds.

Some of the \$359 million allocated this week for 36 projects

is headed this way.

Projects include:

- \$6.6 million to replace the Sly Park Road undercrossing near Pollock Pines. Construction is scheduled for spring of 2014.
- \$2.4 million at the junction of highways 89 and 28 in Tahoe City to install a drainage system for roadway improvement safety.
- \$95,000 for a class I bike path from Clay Street to Bedford Avenue in El Dorado County. This project will provide viable transportation alternative to cyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians by providing safe and direct route in Placerville.