

**Money, money, money**

Student loan debt surpasses the \$1 trillion mark

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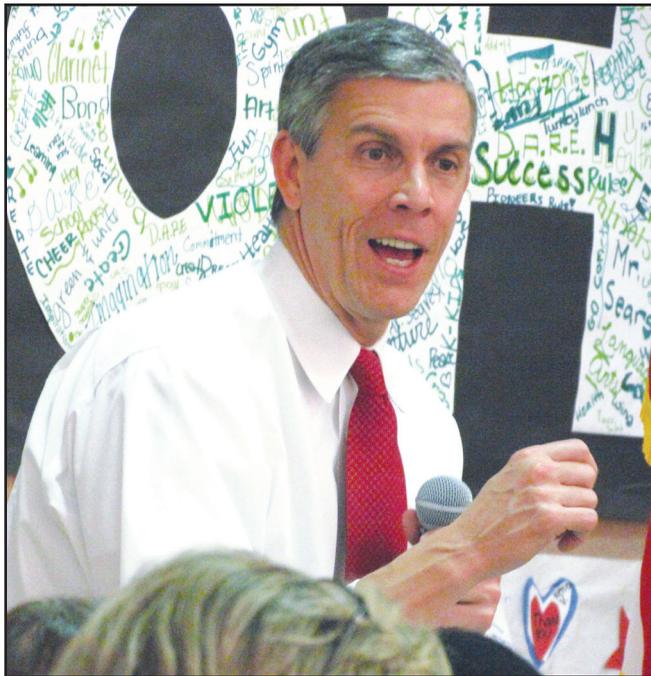


photo by Megan McCormack

**THE
“UPHILL
BATTLE”
WAGES
ON****Student's futures at stake if education does not improve**

Janica Kaneshiro | Editor-in-Chief

America is falling further and further behind, according to US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Not only has the US fallen from first in the world for number of college graduates to 16th over just the span of a single generation, but Ohio alone loses 46,000 students from ninth to 12th grade in drop-outs.

In a November 9 town hall meeting at Mason Intermediate School, Duncan said that though he has faith in American students, the education system in America is flawed, and part of his job is to get the US back on track.

“I'm convinced children here in America are as smart, as talented, as entrepreneurial as children anywhere else in the world, I just want to level the playing field, and frankly, I'm concerned because children in other countries are out-educating us,” Duncan said.

Duncan said the key to high-paying jobs in the future for Americans is the state of today's education; a fact which he said concerns him.

“I really think we're fighting for our country,” Duncan said. “I think we know the jobs of the future are going to go to the country with the most educated workforce. The children are no longer just competing for jobs here in the City of Mason, Ohio, or the even the country, they're competing for jobs in China, India, Singapore and South Korea.”

The “No Child Left Behind Act” is a broken system that has left American schools pushing students toward false standards, according to Duncan. Student Body President, senior Nadine Zaki said that after attending the meeting, it made an impact on her because she believes that standards of achievement are more than black and white.

“I took away that the most important thing was to encourage each person to find their own individual passion,” Zaki said. “Success isn't necessarily defined by how good at math you are, success is found when

you're passionate about something. People are more willing to do things they're passionate about, and most likely to be good at them so...the best thing we can do as students is work on encouraging passion and expanding it.”

Though Duncan said he believes that passion is important, there are several roadblocks in the way of the climb to success for America.

“We have to keep getting better and the challenges are real,” Duncan said. “I'm worried about the decrease in funding. The fundamentals of education are investment and money spent. We need to continue to invest in early childhood education--that is desperately important. We have to make college accessible and affordable, particularly in tough economic times. I worry as a country that when times are tough, we quit investing in education, and we cut our noses off of our faces.”

America tends to take money away from education in tough economics, according to Duncan, which is exactly the opposite of what should be happening.

The proposed “American Jobs Act” would bring in \$2 billion to the state of Ohio alone, which would eventually lead to an improvement in the education system in America, according to Duncan.

“The American jobs act would bring 60 million dollars into education,” Duncan said. “For the state of Ohio that would mean two billion dollars--one billion for teaching jobs, and one billion for renovation and rehabbing schools—making sure we have math labs, science labs and computer labs. This is frankly an uphill battle right now. With the tough economy, we see summer school and extracurriculars being cut back, and that just isn't good for any of us, so we have to continue to invest, and we're trying hard to get that done.”

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