

MAY 8, 2009Krista Heckler, Editor
kheckler@wpllc.net

The Education Report, a weekly publication of WPLLC, provides an executive summary of public policy issues affecting American education. **Please use the bookmarks below to navigate to your area of interest:**

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1. Budget and Appropriations

After months of anticipation, the details of the first Obama Administration budget request made its way to Capitol Hill this week. For education, overall, the news was good. The FY 2010 budget includes \$58.5 billion (depending on who is doing the math, this number can vary) “to advance President Obama’s agenda to reform the nation’s schools while making fiscally responsible decisions to cut ineffective programs and unnecessary personnel”. It was the “fiscally responsible” language that caused some consternation among education advocates.

Coming on the heels of the \$100 billion education investment from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and following months of rhetoric about education as a key driver in revitalizing the economy, advocates anticipated that long starved programs at the Department of Education would finally see an infusion of new capital. There is plenty of new education capital in the budget—approximately \$5 billion—but that funding is dedicated, not surprisingly, to the President’s new priorities. For the most part, the budget freezes education funding at the FY 2009 level. In addition, the request is accompanied by a list of programs proposed for elimination and consolidation—a shorter list than in the previous administration, but a list nonetheless.

The good news portion of the budget provides funding to support the areas of focus that have become the mantra for both the President and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. It includes an increase of \$1.5 billion for Title I School Improvement Grants, 40 percent of which is targeted to middle and high schools; three new early childhood initiatives, including \$500 million for pre K programs and \$300 million for an Early Learning Challenge Fund; \$370 million for Striving Readers with \$300 million targeted to the early grades; a dramatic \$420 million increase in the Teacher Incentive Fund that would support school wide awards

for improvement and expanded recruitment initiatives; and a new \$50 million high school dropout prevention program. For higher education, there is further growth in the Pell Grant Program and a new \$500 million (growing to \$2.5 billion over several years) College Completion Fund grant program. More money is also recommended for the What Works and Innovation Fund and research and development programs.

This new funding makes good on promises to invest more in early childhood education; bring more resources to low performing schools; reward successful teachers and urge them to work in hard to staff schools; develop data and assessment tools that enhance teaching and learning; and promote innovation and excellence. While new initiatives are exciting and help to define the goals of a new President and Administration that the Senate and House leadership want to support, Congress is a large and unwieldy institution that leans toward the status quo. Next week, appropriators will meet to consider a war supplemental spending bill and also to determine just how much money each of the 12 spending subcommittees will be allocated to develop their budgets for FY 2010. That's when the rubber meets the road and we will see just how much actual change is on the horizon for education.

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2. Reauthorizing Best Practices under WIA

On Tuesday, the House Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness Subcommittee held a hearing titled, "New Innovations and Best Practices Under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA)", which specifically examined adult education and family literacy programs under Title II of the Act. This is the fourth in a series of hearings that have focused on innovations and best practices to improve workforce development systems and programs as the Committee works toward reauthorizing WIA.

Adding some excitement to the hearing, Grammy-award winning country singer Gretchen Wilson testified about her personal efforts to complete her GED. Wilson spoke passionately about why she personally chose to go back to school and why she believes it is critical for others who have dropped out of high school to do the same. Martin Finsterbusch, Executive Director of VALUE, Inc. (Voice of Adult Learners United to Educate) also recalled the challenges he faced in efforts to graduate from high school and the many challenges adult learners face as they struggle to maintain employment while going to school. He, like many of the other witnesses, urged the Committee to invest in strategies such as distance learning to help more people gain access to GED-preparation programs and job training on the Internet to make adult education more efficient. He also noted that technology could be especially helpful for adults with disabilities as well as English language learners who may need added supports to graduate.

In addition, Finsterbusch recommended that adult learners have case managers to help them successfully maneuver the often complex workforce system and to provide more training on "soft" skills, in addition to reading and math, to help students gain successful employment. Donna Kinerney, an instructional dean at Montgomery College in Rockville, MD, noted that students in her program have access to courses teaching life skills, literacy and civics to students who are learning English as a second language as well as basic education courses for adults. Kinerney noted that her program desperately needs more qualified teachers with solid training. Both she and Dr. Stephen Reder, a professor at Portland State University,

recommended that a new research center be created to help determine how to best teach adults with varying levels of education, time and resources.

Many members of the subcommittee acknowledged much needs to be done to fix the problem of adult illiteracy and offered their support for increased funding for adult education in a variety of settings – including family literacy settings. Rep. Robert Andrews (D-NJ) even noted, “Adult education was one of the best uses of federal money, since every dollar spent would be repaid several times over when the beneficiaries began earning higher salaries and paying more in taxes.” Rep. Phil Roe (R-TN) won applause from the audience when he said, “We have a No Child Left Behind program, but what we need is a No Adult Left Behind Program.”

For more information on the testimony of each witness go to:

<http://edlabor.house.gov/hearings/2009/05/new-innovations-and-best-pract-2.shtml>.

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3. Educational Excellence through Innovation

On May 5th, the Center for American Progress joined forces with AEI, New Profit, Inc. and Public Impact to discuss entrepreneurial ventures that “expand the boundaries of traditional education models by creating innovative frameworks for schooling”. The event was held to release a report authored by the sponsoring entities, *Stimulating Excellence: Unleashing the Power of Innovation in Education*, and to hear from entrepreneurs featured in the report.

Kim Syman of New Profit Inc. and Bryan Hassel from Public Impact highlighted the report’s findings. Based on a series of interviews with successful entrepreneurs from around the country, the report found:

- A dramatically better “performance culture” in K-12 public education must be created through the availability and use of clear metrics that indicate what is truly happening in schools.
- LEAs hold exclusive rights over the provision of education and a small number of providers monopolize the marketplace for goods and services. The system needs to open up to a diverse set of providers.
- Rigid procurement rules and practices keep the public education closed to entrepreneurship and resistant to customer demand. Greater flexibility would allow for collaboration and therefore a more open and responsive system.
- Entrepreneurship can only thrive when there is diverse financing available to support new ventures. A lack of capital in the education marketplace keeps entrepreneurs at bay. Policymakers need to develop public funding streams that will foster innovation and leverage more private investment.

The event also featured a question and answer session with D.C. Public School Chancellor Michelle Rhee and Fredrick Hess of the American Enterprise Institute. Not surprisingly, Rhee is a great supporter of entrepreneurial entities offering support and services to local school districts. By her own admission, “Everything in D.C. needs to be fixed,” and she is forced to pick a few key issues to “go hard at”. According to Rhee, working with organizations like Teach for America and New Ventures for New Schools provides the D.C.

system with targeted, focused help on issues where these entrepreneurs have particular expertise. In addition, Rhee believes school districts are not as agile and simply cannot innovate as well as these successful entrepreneurs. She attributes this to a “zero sense of accountability” in the public school sector where there is little or no awareness about the link between work performed by individuals and the students served.

From the audience, Rhee was asked about her views on for-profit and not-for-profit organizations. She assured everyone that the distinction was irrelevant to her—she wants to work with programs that are effective, regardless of their tax structure.

In response to a question about how she would spend Race to the Top funds if awarded to D.C., Rhee described a partnership with City Year that involves tutors during the day and after school. She feels that this program will be very effective and would like to expand upon it.

Rhee also noted that education philanthropy is particularly critical in order to inspire innovation and reform in public schools. She explained that creating an entrepreneurial spirit requires a willingness to take some risk. That is hard to do with District funds and within the culture of a school.

For more information on this report, visit:

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/05/pdf/education_entrepreneurs.pdf.

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4. In Brief

REDUCING HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS

On Tuesday, during an event held at the National Press Club, Jack Wuest, Executive Director of the Alternative Schools Network announced the release of a new report that highlights new national and state-level dropout data. The report, “Left Behind in America: The Nation’s Dropout Crisis,” contends that 6.2 million youth between the ages of 16 and 24 years old dropped out of school in 2007. The study ranks the 12 states most affected, according to the number of dropouts as well as the percentage of young adults in each state who have dropped out. The 12 largest states are: California, Texas, Florida, New York, Georgia, Illinois, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Ohio, Michigan, Virginia and New Jersey. In 2007, the states with the highest number of high school dropouts aged 16 to 24 are Texas and California—each has over 600,000 dropouts. Jesse Ruiz, Chairman, Illinois State Board of Education, and Chairman, Council on Re-Enrolling Students Who Dropped Out of School spoke about the HOPE USA proposal—a proposed federal incentive grant program that aims to address the dropout crisis. Ruiz explained that HOPE USA would be a \$2 billion annual federal incentive grant program to support the creation of diverse programs to re-enroll dropouts with a 50/50 match of federal funds to state and local monies. Programs would be designed locally, funded at the average district high school per student cost and have local fiscal determination. The program’s aim is to re-enroll more than 480,000 dropouts each year via comprehensive small-school initiatives led by experienced principals and teachers, focused on real-world learning and accompanied by summer and afterschool programs as well as year-round employment programs. To close the briefing, a panel of experts offered remarks and support for the HOPE

USA proposal and thoughts on ways to address the dropout crisis in America. The panelists also addressed urban youth involvement programs, afterschool programs and technical training programs that engage youth, keep them off the streets and in school, and in other cases, encourage dropouts to re-enroll. Panelists spoke with enthusiasm about the Department of Labor's Summer Youth Employment Program, which received an influx of funding through the ARRA. The program helps to provide paid work experience for low-income, disadvantaged youth. For more information or to read the full report visit:

<http://chicagowritingservice.com/content/wp-content/uploads/2008/09/clmsexecreport2.pdf>

ARRA OVERSIGHT

On Tuesday, the House Science and Technology Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight held a hearing to continue oversight of the accountability and transparency provisions in the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* (ARRA). Subcommittee Members heard testimony from several agency representatives and other experts involved in the management and distribution of ARRA funds on how they plan to ensure an increased level of transparency and accountability. Earl Devaney, Chairman of the ARRA-created Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, explained that the management and presentation of information to the public on how ARRA funds are being invested is instrumental in ensuring that these funds are not misused. Other witnesses testified that the use of ARRA funds requires more transparency in order to ensure that the most effective and efficient programs are being funded, however, some in the academic and research communities were yearning for information. Dr. Clarence Newsome, President of Shaw University, explained that several small colleges and universities have ideas for programs that would be beneficial, but they do not know where or how to find ARRA funding. For more information on this hearing, visit:

http://science.house.gov/publications/hearings_markups_details.aspx?newsid=2450.

EHR ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

On Wednesday and Thursday, the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Advisory Committee for the Directorate on Education and Human Resources (EHR) held their first bi-annual meeting of 2009. The Advisory Committee is charged with guiding NSF and EHR regarding issues related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. In addition to inducting new members, the Advisory Committee heard presentations on several areas of particular interest in the STEM education community. Dr. Freeman Hrabowski, Chairman of the National Academy of Sciences' Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy, discussed measures that are being taken in the K-12 and higher education communities to increase the number of underrepresented and minority groups in STEM fields. Acting NSF Deputy Director, and former Director of EHR, Dr. Cora Marrett discussed with the Committee the important role that they play in conveying outside expert opinion on how the NSF is being managed. Dr. Marrett also noted that the NSF Fiscal Year 2010 budget request was being announced on Thursday and that NSF would see about an 8.6 percent increase over FY 2009 funding levels. For more information on the meeting, visit:

http://nsf.gov/events/event_summ.jsp?cntn_id=114585&org=NSF.

WHITEHOUSE FILLS IN ON HELP COMMITTEE

On Tuesday, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) appointed Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) as a temporary Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and

Pensions (HELP) Committee. The appointment was made to fill the vacancy open since the start of the 111th Congress. Since the beginning of this Congress, Senator Reid has left an opening on the Committee in anticipation of Al Franken (D-MN) being elected. However, with that election still pending, Reid opted to temporarily fill the position before start of the summer debate on health care reform. Senator Whitehouse also serves on the Special Committee on Aging, the Budget Committee, the Environment and Public Works Committee, the Judiciary Committee, and the Select Committee on Intelligence. He chairs the Judiciary Subcommittee on Administrative Oversight and the Courts. For more information Senator Whitehouse, visit: <http://whitehouse.senate.gov/>.

FORDHAM INSTITUTE HOLDS BRIEFING ON NATIONAL STANDARDS

On Tuesday, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute held a briefing titled “International Lessons about National Standards” to address the state of testing and standards in the U.S. and abroad. Three panels of experts convened to discuss national standards in other nations, the process of establishing common standards for U.S. schools, and how to ensure that we “do national standards right.” While some of the experts argued that national standards are indeed possible, especially in this unique political moment and with such widespread interest, others were less optimistic. “We’ve seen efforts for national standards come and go before,” said Michael Petrilli, Vice President of National Programs and Policy at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute. For more information, visit www.edexcellence.net.

PRE-K NOW HOLDS CALL ON INVESTING TITLE I FUNDS IN PRE-K

On Wednesday, Pre-K Now and the American Federation of Teachers held a conference call on “Investing Title I Funds in Pre-K.” Superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools Dr. Jerry Weast described the changes they made to ensure that students graduate ready for college. “We figured out that certain things need to be addressed before children enter kindergarten,” he said. Montgomery County now uses Title I and Head Start funding to provide 33 half-and-full day preschool classes. In addition to certified teachers and a strong, fully-aligned curriculum, the preschool program boasts free breakfast and lunch, free transportation, medical and dental screening, and plenty of parental involvement. “Our preliminary findings show that greater academic achievement is cost effective, and that Latino and female students have received the greatest benefits,” said Janine Bacquie, Director of the Early Childhood Programs and Services. For more information, visit www.preknow.org.

NEW AMERICA FOUNDATION HOLDS BRIEFING ON QUALITY PRE-K

On Thursday, the New America Foundation held a briefing on “Putting the ‘Quality’ into Quality Pre-K: Lessons from Data-Driven Early Interventions.” At the event, Dr. Craig Ramey, Director of Georgetown University’s Center on Health and Education, opined that while the future looks very bright for early childhood education, he expects we will face challenges regarding quality. Ramey described how high quality early childhood education could transform the lives of children from high-risk families, both in the immediate and long term. He argued that many well-intended preschool programs have failed to close the achievement gap because teachers are not well prepared, children don’t spend enough time in the classroom, there is a lack of individualized instruction, parents are not fully engaged, and there is a failure to measure and report on the programs. For more information, visit www.newamerica.net.

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5. New Publications

“Federal Education Budget Project” New America Foundation (May 2009).

<http://febp.newamerica.net/>

“Basic Reading Skills and the Literacy of America’s Least Literate Adults: Results from the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy” National Center for Education Statistics (May 2009).

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009481.pdf>

“Effectiveness of Selected Supplemental Reading Comprehension Interventions: Impacts on a First Cohort of Fifth-Grade Students” National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (May 2009).

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20094032/pdf/20094032.pdf>

“International Lessons About National Standards” Thomas B. Fordham Institute (May 2009).

http://edexcellence.net/international_education_standards/policy_brief.pdf

“Influenza and School Preparedness” National Association of State Boards of Education (May 2009).

<http://nasbe.org/index.php/file-repository?func=startdown&id=887>

“Parsing the Achievement Gap II” Educational Testing Service (May 2009).

<http://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/PICPARSINGII.pdf>

“Left Behind in America: The Nation’s Dropout Crisis” Northeastern University (May 2009).

<http://chicagowritingservice.com/content/wp-content/uploads/2008/09/clmsexecreport2.pdf>

“The Quality Imperative: A State Guide to Achieving the Promise of Extended Learning Opportunities” Council of Chief State School Officers (April 2009).

<http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0904ELOQUALITYIMPERATIVE.PDF>

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6. In the News

“Obama seeks to keep vouchers, for now” USA Today (5/7/09).

http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2009-05-06-obamaduncan_N.htm

“It’s Not for Everyone: High Turnover and Job’s Challenges Keep Special Education Teachers in Demand” Washington Post (5/7/09).

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/05/AR2009050504406.html>

“College-School Partnerships Offer Head Start on Higher Education” Washington Post (5/6/09).

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/05/AR2009050503737.html>

“Future is dim for Bright Future scholarships” Miami Herald (5/6/09).
<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/education/story/1034181.html>

“Writing Disorder May Be Common Among Kids” Forbes (5/5/09).
<http://www.forbes.com/feeds/hscout/2009/05/05/hscout626417.html>

“Students Letter to Congress Leads to School Makeover” USA Today (5/5/09).
http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2009-05-05-south-carolina_N.htm

“Stimulus Funds Up the Ante for Public Schools” USA Today (5/5/09).
http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2009-05-04-stimulus-schools_N.htm

“Schools Consider Four Day Weeks” Los Angeles Times (5/4/09).
<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-four-day4-2009may04,0,5367225.story>

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7. About WPLLC

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- Meeting and Conference Planning

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Readers are encouraged to send comments about this publication to Krista Heckler at kheckler@wpllc.net or call 202.289.3900.