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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

The Congress returned to town this week, relaxed, tanned and rested after the Memorial Day break. Well, not exactly. The tone was fairly crabby as the debate on healthcare reform heated up, with the President making his views known on some controversial issues. Tempers appeared rather short as Senators started lining up in the “for” and “against” column for the President’s nominee to the Supreme Court, Sonia Sotomayor, as she began meetings with individual Members.

Even Secretary of Education Arne Duncan ran into unexpected criticism during his first day of appearances on the Hill defending the Administration’s FY2010 budget proposal. He spent a long day answering questions from appropriators about the President’s plan for education spending. In his appearances before the House and Senate Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittees, the overall tone was friendly, but without exception, Members offered complaints and concerns. They also peppered him with questions about the distribution of the \$100 billion in *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* dollars that are flowing out of federal coffers. Again, there were concerns and fears that the massive amount of money would not adequately make up for losses in education budgets in all but a handful of states. The Secretary held up well under the scrutiny, but it was a tough lesson in governing under the legislative so-called “three party system”. The President might set the agenda and recommend a budget, but where the rubber meets the road on spending is Capitol Hill. Members of Congress do not willingly give up the driver’s seat when money is concerned.

An expected step forward in the annual appropriations process did not take place this week. Appropriators failed to hand out the 302B allocations—these are the numbers that signal to Subcommittee Chairs just how much money they can spend for the federal agencies. Even so, the House Appropriations Committee began holding and scheduling bill mark-ups this week,

still hoping to meet a July 4 target date for approval of all 12 spending bills. What held up the allocation meeting was a delay a meeting of the House and Senate conferees on the emergency war supplemental spending bill. That will not happen until next week.

Is all this starting to sound too familiar? In spite of a whole new team taking charge here in Washington, old partisan habits die hard, and Congress is fiercely protective of its rightful role in spending federal funds.

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2. House Education and Labor Committee Discusses Charter Schools

On Thursday, the House Education and Labor Committee held a hearing to examine how success at high-performing charter schools can be replicated or inform education reform efforts, including the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. The FY 2010 budget request from the Obama Administration includes an increased investment in charter schools, and recent comments from Secretary of Education Arne Duncan suggest that he sees the model as an effective one in education reform.

Committee Chairman George Miller (D-CA) opened the hearing with a statement supportive and complimentary of high-performing charter schools and pointed to a number of exemplary charter schools and charter school models and their results, characterizing charter schools as “laboratories of innovation” in education that yield lessons that can and should be replicated. Pointing to the successes of charter schools in successfully intervening in failing schools, improving achievement among hard to serve populations, and in fostering an entrepreneurial spirit around addressing the failures of public education, Jim Shelton, Assistant Deputy Secretary for Innovation and Improvement at the Department of Education, said, “Improving our education system by expanding high-quality public charter schools is one of this Administration’s highest priorities.” John King, <http://edlabor.house.gov/documents/111/pdf/testimony/20090604JohnKingTestimony.pdf> Managing Director of the Excellence Preparatory Network for Uncommon Schools in New York, discussed the successes of Roxbury Preparatory Charter school in Boston which he co-founded before joining Uncommon Schools. According to King, Roxbury has been the highest performing urban middle school in Massachusetts for five years and has successfully “closed the racial achievement gap on state exams.” King explained how Roxbury achieved these results, saying that the school established a compelling mission to prepare its students to enter, succeed in, and graduate from college. Leadership also created a small school community-one in which every adult knows every student.

Before adjourning the hearing, Chairman Miller spoke about the importance of providing strong public education for all young people and leveraging the lessons learned at charters to produce more widespread results. His colleagues agreed.

For more information on this hearing, including witness testimony and a webcast, visit:

<http://edlabor.house.gov/hearings/full-committee/>

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3. In Brief

NTP RELEASES NEW REPORT ON TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

On Monday the New Teacher Project (NTP) held an event at the National Press Club and a webinar to release their new report, “The Widget Effect: Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness.” The report studied teacher evaluation and dismissal in four states: Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, and Ohio. Tim Daly from the New Teacher Project noted that the report illustrates school districts fail to acknowledge or act on differences in teacher performance. He stated, “When it comes to officially appraising performance and supporting improvement, a culture of indifference about the quality of instruction in each classroom dominates. At the heart of the matter are teacher evaluation systems, which in theory should serve as the primary mechanism for assessing such variations, but in practice tell us little about how one teacher differs from any other, except teachers whose performance is so egregiously poor as to warrant dismissal.” Daly stated that the failure of evaluation systems to provide accurate and credible information about individual teachers’ instructional performance reinforces the idea of the “widget effect”. The widget effect describes the tendency of school districts to assume classroom effectiveness is the same from teacher to teacher. The report makes four policy recommendations for school districts: 1) adopt a comprehensive performance evaluation system; 2) differentiate teachers based on their effectiveness in promoting student achievement and provide targeted professional development to help them improve; 3) train administrators and other evaluators in the teacher performance evaluation system and hold them accountable for using it fairly and effectively, integrate the performance evaluation system with critical human capital policies and functions such as teacher assignment, professional development, compensation, retention and dismissal; and 4) address ineffective teaching through dismissal policies that provide lower-stakes options for ineffective teachers to exit the district and a system of due process that is fair but efficient. To view the full report visit: <http://widgeteffect.org/>

NCTM RELEASE GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR MATH CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

This week, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) released, “Guiding Principles for Mathematics Curriculum and Assessment” to influence ongoing and future development of uniform curriculum expectations or national standards for mathematics education. Related to the release, NCTM President Henry Kepner, Jr. said, “The continuing discussions about common core standards or a national curriculum should be based on the work that has already been done. Since any discussion of true national standards relates to the fundamental issue of local control in education, effective policy should be formed by the best current information on mathematics teaching and learning. The development of any curriculum or standards should take advantage of what has already been carefully crafted by a consensus of mathematics teachers, teacher leaders, mathematics educators, mathematicians, and researchers.” NCTM first developed content standards and a guiding framework for curriculum development in 1989 with its publication of “Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics”, which was updated in 2000 as “Principles and Standards for School Mathematics.” NCTM will also be releasing this year, “Focus in High School Mathematics: Reasoning and Sense Making” which will address mathematics education in high school. To view the new report visit:

<http://www.nctm.org/standards/content.aspx?id=23273>

COMMON CORE HOLDS BRIEFING ON INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

On Tuesday, Common Core held a briefing to release their new report, “Why We’re Behind: What Top Nations Teach Their Students But We Don’t.” The report examined the content of education in nine high-performing nations that consistently outperform the U.S. on international assessments. Lynn Munson, President and Executive Director of Common Core, stated that researchers focused on the nine nations that consistently have outranked the U.S. on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA): Finland, Hong Kong, South Korea, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, Netherlands, and Switzerland. Munson stated, “Each of the nations that consistently outrank the U.S. on the PISA exam provides their students with a comprehensive, content-rich education in the liberal arts and sciences. These nations differ greatly with regard to how they accomplish this goal. Some have a national curriculum and standards but no tests, others have both, and some leave everything up to the states.” Martin West, Assistant Professor of Education, Political Science, and Public Policy at Brown University, spoke about the findings in the report and noted that on the 2006 PISA, 15-year old American students ranked 21st in science and 25th in math among the 30 industrialized nations that comprise the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). According to West, these results show American students lag behind their peers in top-scoring Finland by two grade levels in both subjects. West argued that the implementation of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) prompted students to improve skills in tested subjects, but at the price of performance in untested subjects that often go untaught, such as art and music. To view the full report visit:

http://www.commoncore.org/docs/CCreport_whybehind.pdf

PANEL DISCUSSION FEATURES EINSTEIN FELLOWS

On Tuesday, the Woodrow Wilson Center held a panel discussion featuring four Einstein Fellows who discussed their experiences working in government during their fellowships and their hopes for the future. Einstein Fellowships are awarded to distinguished elementary and secondary math and science teachers who are selected to serve in a Congressional office or federal agency. All the fellows expressed pride and satisfaction at having participated in the program. Karen Stiner, a middle school Math teacher in Oregon and an Einstein Fellow for the House Subcommittee on Research and Science Education, emphasized the importance of coordinating agency strategies in order to improve science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education across the nation. Ed Potosnak, a high school Chemistry teacher in New Jersey and an Einstein Fellow in the Office of Representative Michael Honda (D-CA), also expressed his delight that “people do listen” and that the Einstein Fellowship has led him to find that in Washington, “there are unique opportunities for someone with an education background.” He commented that the greatest part of the fellowship program was getting to meet other teachers and build off of each other’s knowledge. Questions from the audience concluded the discussion, highlighted by a question as to whether preparing a child for an education in science and math can start too early. All the panelists agreed that it cannot. Stiner suggested a system by which a “science specialist” would be on staff. All panelists lamented the disappearance of science from primary classrooms and Potosnak suggested that national standards might help remedy this. For more information on Einstein Fellowships, please visit <http://www.scied.science.doe.gov/scied/Einstein/about.htm>

ETS HOLDS BRIEFING ON ASSESSING ELLS

On Wednesday, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) held a briefing to discuss the fairness and validity of educational assessments for English language learners (ELLs). During the

briefing, ETS Associate Research Scientist Maria Martiniello discussed some of the issues in the assessment of mathematical knowledge of ELLs. Martiniello discussed how linguistic complexity in math instruction causes problems for ELLs, specifically, how these students do not necessarily struggle with mathematical concepts, but with the complex ways in which math word problems are phrased. ETS Lead Program Administrator Mary Pitoniak explained that when developing assessments for K-12 students, it is very important to consider the special needs of ELLs. Pitoniak urged the assessment authors to consider ELLs when designing tests, and to assure that the test is clearly written using accessible language. “Some students may need a change to the standardized testing conditions to make the test more fair and accessible without changing the construct,” Pitoniak said. For more information on ELLs and the ETS, visit: <http://www.ets.org/ell>.

BROADENING PARTICIPATION IN UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

On Wednesday, the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) held a briefing to discuss their recently published book, “Broadening Participation in Undergraduate Research: Fostering Excellence and Enhancing the Impact.” One of the book’s co-editors Mary Boyd, Ph.D., Dean of Arts and Sciences at the University of San Diego, explained that the book was written to make a case for why undergraduate research needs to be broadened to include more women and underrepresented minority groups. “Broadening participation in undergraduate research is about maximizing potential – the potential of students, research, and institutions – and expanding our understanding of the world,” Boyd said. Daryl Chubin, one of the book’s authors and Director of the Center for Advancing Science and Engineering Capacity at AAAS, noted that undergraduate research opportunities often play an integral role in preparing undergraduate students for further higher education and careers in the 21st century. Panelists at the briefing agreed that while working with the administration at higher education institutions to improve undergraduate research opportunities, it can be almost more important to impress the importance of undergraduate research on the faculty of these institutions. For more information visit: <http://www.cur.org/publications/broadening.html>.

NEW AMERICAN FOUNDATION HOSTS DISCUSSION ON CHILD WELL-BEING INDEX

On Wednesday, the New America Foundation hosted a discussion titled, “The 2009 Child Well-Being Index: The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Children.” The purpose of the event was to release the 2009 Child and Youth Well-Being Index report, along with a Special Focus Report titled, “Anticipating Impacts of a 2008-2010 Recession.” Dr. Kenneth Land, Project Coordinator for the Child and Youth Well-Being Index, presented the 2009 CWI report, which is the composite measure of trends in the well-being of U.S. children. The report provides the answers to whether children’s overall well-being has improved or deteriorated over the last two decades. Land emphasized that despite a predicted uptick in the economy in the third or fourth quarter of this year, the effects of the recession will most likely directly impact child-well being at least into 2010. Major predictions of the 2009 CWI Report include: a drop in economic well-being being the major cause in the total drop in child well-being; the child obesity and mortality rates (of children 12 to 19) will increase as a result of this decrease in economic well-being; and cuts in public sector spending in afterschool programs and early childhood education will have a major effect on the long-term economic success of poor children. To view the full reports visit http://www.fcd-us.org/resources/resources_show.htm?doc_id=906348

FORDHAM INSTITUTE DISCUSSES PROS AND CONS OF UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL

On Thursday, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute held a discussion on universal preschool and discussed Chester Finn's new book, "Reroute the Preschool Juggernaut." Finn, President of the Fordham Institute, assured the audience that he does not disagree with the concept of preschool. Finn argued that universal preschool is "bad public policy" because the middle- and upper-class can already afford it and because, for the disadvantaged children who need it, universal preschool is not enough preparation. Instead he proposed a targeted approach to public preschool, which would provide those who need it most with all of the necessary preparation. W. Steven Barnett, co-director of the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University, struck an antagonistic tone early on in the briefing by calling the book "inaccurate and poorly reasoned." He criticized some of the book's methodology before countering with the argument that the middle-class children for whom Finn argues universal pre-K would be wasteful, are not actually getting the quality of preparation necessary for them to succeed in K-12 schools. Neal McCluskey of the Cato Institute cautioned against government involvement in pre-education because targeted programs tend to lose focus as the wealthy demand additional services. Sarah Mead of the New America Foundation agreed with Finn that K-12 education needs to improve its ability to build on the gains generated by pre-K and that assessment of pre-K programs need to have a greater focus on results and less of an emphasis on inputs. For more information visit:

<http://www.hooverpress.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=1346>

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4. New Publications

"Guiding Principles for Mathematics Curriculum and Assessment" National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (June 2009).

<http://www.nctm.org/standards/content.aspx?id=23273>

"The Widget Effect: Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness" The New Teacher Project (June 2009).

<http://widgeteffect.org/>

"An Overview of Technical Procedures for the NAEP Assessment" National Center for Education Statistics (June 2009),

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2009493>

"Paying Teachers for Results" Center for American Progress (June 2009).

http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/05/performance_pay_poverty.html

"Successmaker" What Works Clearinghouse Institute for Education Services (June 2009).

http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/adolescent_literacy/successmaker/.

"Reroute the Preschool Juggernaut" Thomas B. Fordham Institute (June 2009).

<http://www.hooverpress.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=1346>

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5. In the News

“Next Test: Value of \$125,000-a-Year Teachers” New York Times (6/4/09).
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/05/education/05charter.html? r=1&ref=education>

“Program Helps Military Veterans Become Teachers” Washington Post (6/4/09).
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/03/AR2009060303884.html?hpid=artslot>

“Women Bridging Gap in Science Opportunities” New York Times (6/2/09).
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/03/science/03discrim.html? r=1&hpw>

“US Effort to Reshape Schools Faces Challenge” New York Times (6/2/09).
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/02/education/02educ.html?ref=education>

“A Changing Student Body” Washington Post (6/1/09).
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/31/AR2009053102229.html>

“Charter Schools Provide Good Model on Teacher Pay” Washington Post (6/1/09).
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/31/AR2009053102236.html?hpid=sec-education>

“46 States, D.C. Plan to Draft Common Education Standards” Washington Post (6/1/09).
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/31/AR2009053102339.html?sid=ST2009060100036>

“Supreme Court to Address Meeting the Needs of Special Education Students” New York Times (5/31/09).
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/31/education/31tuition.html?ref=education>

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6. About WPLLC

For over 30 years, the principals and staff at WPLLC have specialized in the field of education, making sure the voices of associations and nonprofit organizations are heard—on Capitol Hill and in the media. As a full service government affairs and public relations firm, we work in strong partnership with our clients to position them for the greatest success now and in the future. Working as a team, relationships are structured to maximize the strengths of each client; the client’s mission is our driving force as we help them clarify needs, set goals and craft and implement successful strategies. WPLLC provides expertise in a variety of services:

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- Strategic Planning
- Grassroots Activities
- Association Management
- Meeting and Conference Planning

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