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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

Though the Congress remains out of session, subject to the Call of the Chair, there is no shortage of activity on Capitol Hill. The Obama Transition Team is hard at work, reviewing agency budgets and program reports and meeting with stakeholders in their temporary offices throughout the city. Announcements continue to trickle out about key appointments in the new Administration.

One announcement that remains under wraps is the new Secretary of Education. Though the list of possible choices has not been modified in several weeks, consensus about the leading candidate continues to confound education advocates. Will it be someone who is perceived as a friend to the status quo or a so-called reformer who would shake up the system? No one seems to know for sure. A press conference for President-Elect Obama is scheduled for Monday. Perhaps that is when we will get the news that everyone is waiting for patiently.

Not all energy is being spent playing the “who’s on first game” here in the nation’s Capitol. The big three auto executives from Ford, General Motors and Chrysler, drove into town this week, armed with plans for an industry bailout that appears to be growing as we speak. It is unclear how well their requests were received among lawmakers. What is clear is that a massive economic recovery package will be introduced early in 2009 and many on Capitol Hill are working hard on the details. It will almost certainly contain funding for school construction along with a possible Pell Grant award increase and a needed infusion of cash for local school districts through an increase in funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). There is no shortage of spending suggestions. The challenge for the new Administration and congressional leaders will be

putting on the brakes. The current estimate for the bailout is creeping up into the many billions of dollars.

On the budget front, it appears the timetable for completing action on this year's government wide spending plan has shifted into overdrive. Appropriations Committee staffers are hard at work reconciling their differences on the nine unfinished appropriations bills. The goal is to have an FY 2009 Omnibus bill ready for floor action as soon as the 111th Congress is sworn in during the week of January 5. If the additional \$25 billion that the Congress was willing to spend beyond the Administration's domestic budget proposal is included in the Omnibus plan that will serve as a great holiday gift to all of us.

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2. Education Sector Hosts Briefing on Technology and the Cost of Higher Education

On Tuesday, the Education Sector held a briefing, "Is Technology the Answer to Rising College Costs?" focusing on the effectiveness of incorporating new technologies into traditional courses to drive down the costs of higher education while maintaining quality at large state universities, as well as smaller community colleges and other public schools. During the discussion, Kevin Carey with the Education Sector, provided an overview of Virginia Tech University's "Math Emporium," a resource developed by the University's math department in the wake of massive budget cuts. The Math Emporium has replaced the University's large, mandatory, introductory math courses required of the growing number of engineering students. The Emporium provides students with a 24-hour computer lab, as well as online courses to replace its traditional lecture-style math courses. By providing students with a technology-based learning environment where they can work, learn, test, and complete courses at their own pace, the Math Emporium has reduced costs for the math department by about 75 percent.

Carey and other experts on the panel also noted that while programs like the Math Emporium are able to successfully reduce costs for colleges and universities, they have also helped to increase students' academic achievement levels. Unfortunately for students, the increase in student achievement is making these higher education institutions more competitive with other schools which have resulted in increases in tuition. Overall, the panelists were in agreement that new technologies can be utilized to both reduce the cost of certain education programs at institutions of higher education, while continuing to provide high-quality educational opportunities to students. In addition, the panelists agreed that colleges and universities could broaden their public appeal further by using these savings to reduce tuition for students and their families.

For more information, visit:

http://www.educationsector.org/events/events_show.htm?doc_id=717088.

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3. In Brief

NEA HOSTS DISCUSSION ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF AT-RISK YOUTH

On Monday, the National Education Association (NEA) held a discussion and book signing featuring Dr. Susan B. Neuman, author of *Changing the Odds for Children at Risk: Seven Essential Principles of Educational Programs that Break the Cycle of Poverty*. Neuman is currently a professor at the University of Michigan School of Education, and was the former Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education in the Bush Administration. Neuman offered a number of recommendations to the Obama Administration on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, commonly referred to as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). First and foremost, she argued that the government needs to address the devastating effects of poverty on children by supporting comprehensive programs, like early education, afterschool, family support, and health care. While Neuman still supports the fundamental pillars that the NCLB were built upon such as stronger accountability for results; more freedom for states and communities; proven education methods; and more choices for parents, she believes the law has focused far too much on system failures and ignored children's extenuating circumstances. In its reauthorization, she hopes to see communities and parents re-engaged, a wider safety net for disadvantaged children and a more positive relationship with teachers. She further called upon President-elect Obama to "clean house" by eliminating programs in the Department of Education that are not working and re-routing the funding to those that are. For more information on Newman's book, visit <http://www.sbneuman.com/>.

CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS HOST BRIEFING ON IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

On Tuesday, the Center for Applied Linguistics hosted a briefing on "Educational Settings and the Acquisition of English as a Second Language" featuring Visiting Professor Rod Ellis from the Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. In addition, Ellis is a TESOL Professor and Chair of the Graduate School of Education at Anaheim University in Anaheim, CA. While school districts around the country continue to struggle with teaching English effectively to the growing number of English language learners (ELLs), Ellis argued that in addition to quality teaching, the classroom and social settings outside the classroom have a great deal of influence on the ability to learn a second language. This includes the learner's attitude toward the target language, the perceived social value of the second language, opportunities outside the classroom to use the second language and how the language is viewed in society. In addition, research indicates that students who receive both formal learning in the classroom, as well as informal learning in a less structured setting, do the best in terms of fluency. While a number of schools use a variety of methods from submersion to segregation to dual language instruction it's important to customize instruction for students and be aware of the local context in which the language is being taught. Ellis recommends that school districts not implement "one size fits all" policies and instead develop realistic goals and objectives. For more information visit: www.cal.org

NCPPE RELEASES NATIONAL REPORT CARD ON HIGHER EDUCATION

On Wednesday, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (NCPPE) held a briefing to discuss their new report, *Measuring Up 2008: The National Report Card on Higher Education*. The report card is the fifth in a series that has evaluated the progress of both the nation and states in higher education opportunity and effectiveness since 2000. The report evaluates, compares, and grades each state on six key areas: 1) how well each state prepares its high school students for college; 2) the level of participation in each state; 3) the affordability of college; 4) the level of degree completion; 5) the economic and civic benefits of college-educated residents in each state; and 6) how well college-educated residents of each state perform on a variety of measures of knowledge and skills. Governor James B. Hunt, Jr., Chair of the NCPPE stated, “There have been improvements in college preparation and some progress in access and completion. But the rates of improvement are slow.” According to the report, sizable gaps across the country still exist in college opportunity and affordability. President of the National Center, Patrick Callan, warned that if we “deal with this recession like we have in the past, by reducing college financial aid, we can be sure the other indicators for college opportunities will decline across the board as well.” To view the national and state reports, visit www.highereducation.org.

ADVISORY COUNCIL PREVIEWES FINANCIAL LITERACY RECOMMENDATIONS

The President’s Advisory Council on Financial Literacy held their sixth meeting via teleconference on Thursday. During this final meeting before the release of their first annual report to the President, the Council reviewed and agreed upon its final recommendations which include: mandating K-12 financial education in all schools; nationalizing the National Financial Literacy Challenge; implementing a Post-Secondary Financial Education Honor Roll; and promoting best practices in financial education at colleges and universities. Following a review of all of the recommendations made by each of the Council’s committees, the Council adopted all 15 of them. On December 16, the Council will present their final report, including these recommendations, to the President. For more information on the President’s Advisory Council on Financial Literacy, visit: <http://www.treas.gov/offices/domestic-finance/financial-institution/fin-education/council/>.

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4. New Publications

“Measuring Up 2008: The National Report Card on Higher Education” National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (December 2008).
www.highereducation.org.

“Acting on Data: How Urban High Schools Use Data to Improve Instruction” New Schools (December 2008).
<http://www.newschoools.org/files/ActingonData.pdf>

“Improving Charter School Leadership” National Governors Association (December 2008).

<http://www.nga.org/portal/site/nga/menuitem.9123e83a1f6786440ddcbeeb501010a0/?vgnnextoid=cdd33a0370cad110VgnVCM1000001a01010aRCRD>

“Measuring the Status and Change of NAEP State Inclusion Rates for Students with Disabilities” National Center for Education Statistics (December 2008).

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/studies/2009453.asp>

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5. In the News

“Strapped Schools May Boost Class Size” Washington Post (12/5/08).

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/04/AR2008120404320.html>

“Educators to State: Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is” Miami Herald (12/5/08).

<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/education/story/800124.html>

“Who Will He Choose?” New York Times (12/5/08).

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/05/opinion/05brooks.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=who%20will%20he%20choose&st=cse

“US Lags in Providing College Access, Study Finds” Washington Post (12/3/08).

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/02/AR2008120203020.html>

“The World is Moving Past USA in Higher Ed” USA Today (12/3/08).

http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2008-12-03-college-preparation_N.htm

“Adds on Tests Add Up for Teacher” USA Today (12/2/08).

http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2008-12-01-test-ads_N.htm

“Turning Around the Idea of Student Loans” New York Times (12/1/08).

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/01/education/01microbank.html?_r=1&ref=education

“The Trouble with Textbooks Spells Out Flaws” USA Today (12/1/08).

http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2008-11-30-textbooks_N.htm

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6. About WPLLC

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- Public Relations & Communications
- Policy Research and Analysis
- Strategic Planning
- Grassroots Activities
- Association Management
- Meeting and Conference Planning

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