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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:**

1. [Budget and Appropriations](#)
2. [ETS and College Board Hold Event on Assessments](#)
3. [Aspen Institute Hosts Event to Examine Urban Teaching Residency Programs](#)
4. [NBES Discusses Reading First and Afterschool Programs](#)
5. [In Brief](#)
6. [New Publications](#)
7. [In the News](#)
8. [About WPLLC](#)

1. Budget and Appropriations

This week, Congress returned to the Capitol following a six-week recess. Those of us left behind enjoyed the relative quiet and think it's only fair that elected officials are regularly accessible at home to those who elected them to the Congress. These periodic breaks are designed to let tempers cool and let the electorate inform the elected of their priorities and their assessment of work done to date. By all accounts the public is dissatisfied—the approval rating for the Congress has never been lower. Given the long list of unfinished business before the Congress and the limited number of working days that remain, let's hope they got the message.

The first order of business was the very item that sent Members home in a bad mood in early August—U.S. dependency on foreign oil. The leadership in the House and Senate—both Democratic and Republican—has been working hard to come up with a compromise energy package that would assure the public that something is being done to address high prices at the gas pump. The issue of drilling for oil—where it can be done and what it costs corporations—is not just a matter for an energy bill. Congress will be at risk of shutting down the government on October 1, the start of the new fiscal year, if they can't come to agreement on this issue. How are these two items connected? The Energy and Water Development appropriations bill contains language each year that prohibits offshore drilling. Republicans in the House of Representatives and the President have threatened to oppose or veto the continuing resolution that must pass by the end of September to ensure continued government operations if the language is included this year.

A continuing resolution will be necessary because the Congress has run out of time to pass individual spending bills. Missing that October 1 deadline means all federal agencies would lose their spending authority for the new fiscal year. Given the fact that many democrats have moderated their positions on offshore drilling, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) fear they lack the votes to keep the prohibition in place and, as a result, are in a mood to compromise. Everyone on Capitol Hill is anxious to return home to campaign for presidential candidates and, in many instances, for themselves. The September 26 target adjournment date will certainly mark the end of the 110th if the issue of oil drilling can be resolved.

Another unresolved matter is whether or not Members will return to Washington after the election. Again, the details of the continuing resolution will come into play. If the leadership can garner enough votes to keep the government operating through January, that would be the preferred plan. Alternatively, if there are only enough votes for a bill that expires in November, a lame duck session will be required. Historically, these sessions are as productive as the name infers. A November expiration date would mean a return to Washington in mid-November or early December, with hopes of moving forward on adopting a new budget. It's hard to imagine any spirit of compromise will grow after the election, so let's hope cooler heads prevail in the next few weeks, and a longer term continuing resolution can be agreed upon.

[Back to top.](#)

2. ETS and College Board Hold Event on Assessments

On Monday, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and the College Board held a conference titled, "Educational Testing in America: State Assessments, Achievement Gaps, National Policy and Innovations." The focus of the event was the examination of the state of testing tools and procedures around the country, and to investigate innovations that would make these tools more effective instructional tools and more accurate indicators of academic success. In the event's keynote address, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings argued that testing has made great strides since enactment of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001. NCLB has brought "actionable, useful data that is reliable and that lawmakers can act on," she said, and now is the time to decide how to act on this data to reform the lowest performing schools. Spellings said she has encountered "tremendous pressure to weaken this legislation," but she strongly believes that the core principles of the law must be retained. Spellings announced that the Department of Education will release her finalized regulations on compliance guidance in November, which will focus on "graduation rates, clarification around multiple assessments, fine tuning of accountability system" among other things.

David P. Cleary, Staff Director for Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee argued that Washington stay out of legislating matters like assessment, because "we'll just screw it up." Instead, Cleary thinks high standards should be set for education and states should determine how those standards are met. Roberto Rodriguez, Senior Education Advisor to Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) on the Senate HELP Committee, on the other hand, said we need to focus on both large scale evaluation and informing the work of teachers in

closing the achievement gap, not one or the other. For more information, visit www.ets.org.

[Back to top.](#)

3. Aspen Institute Hosts Event to Examine Urban Teaching Residency Programs

As part of its “Rethinking Human Capital in Public Education” initiative, the Aspen Education and Society Program gathered education advocates to listen to leaders of two urban teacher residencies (UTRs), an innovative approach to preparing and retaining teachers, and policy leaders in Washington, DC in positions to influence consideration of these models in federal legislation.

The event, which featured two programs, the Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) in Chicago and the Boston Teacher Residency (BTR), allowed panelists to discuss the findings and assertions of a recent report, *Creating and Sustaining Urban Teacher Residencies: A New Way to Recruit, Prepare and Retain Effective Teachers in High-Needs Districts*, from the Aspen Institute and the Center for Teaching Quality. The report says, in part, “...(UTRs) are an emerging innovation designed to embody best practices in recruitment, screening, preparation, placement, induction, and teacher leadership for urban school districts. As such, UTRs can be a key element of urban districts’ portfolio of pathways into teaching and a lynchpin of a larger strategy to strengthen the districts’ human capital system.” Core policy principles of UTRs include, the selective recruitment of highly qualified candidates, the expectation that teachers are extensively prepared before they begin to teach, a focus on meeting the needs of high-needs school districts, and a high-quality support for graduates after they become teachers.

Discussions among the panelists note that the Boston and Chicago programs are highly rigorous and are yielding good results. However, the two programs require significant investments—investments that currently come from combined business, philanthropy and public dollars—that are accommodating modest yearly cohorts of 70-80 teachers. These teachers finish their programs and honor their service requirements, and both Chicago and Boston report retention rates that are astonishingly higher than rates among their novice teaching peers. In Chicago, the program reports a 90-95 percent retention rate after the first three years of teaching.

The policy panel lauded the work and results of the two featured UTRs, and pointed to the recent modifications of federal investments in teacher preparation programs, as included in the Higher Education Opportunity Act, as federal encouragement of replication of these and similar efforts. Of course, when the discussion turned to data and results in increased student achievement, both BTR and AUSL said that they hope to document achievement data in coming years, but no conclusive data exists to date.

For more information on the event and to access a copy of the report, visit: <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/>.

[Back to top.](#)

4. NBES Discusses Reading First and Afterschool Programs

This week the National Board of Education Sciences (NBES) met and had a full agenda to address, including, among other items, updates on the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) center activities, IES-funded studies, and a discussion of the NBES report that evaluates IES.

Fred Doolittle with MDRC shared the results of a study funded by IES that examines the development and evaluation of instructional resources for reading and math in 21st Century Learning Community Centers afterschool programs. The study's purpose was to test whether providing formal afterschool instruction in reading or math for 45 minutes per day produces better academic outcomes than afterschool programs which do not incorporate such scripted instruction. The findings showed that for the math sites, there was a statistically significant impact on the SAT 10 math achievement test, particularly for the fourth and fifth graders. For the reading sites, there were no impacts on reading performance on the SAT 10 academic achievement. Beth Gamse with Abt Associates presented the research conducted by Abt and MDRC, the firms charged with conducting a mandated impact study of Reading First. The Reading First Interim Impact Study compared Reading First schools to non-Reading First schools, and answered two questions: 1) What is the impact of Reading First on classroom instruction?; and 2) What is the impact of Reading First on student reading achievement? The final Reading First Impact Report is expected later this fall, and will examine the relationship between instruction and achievement, and update the outcome findings with 2006-2007 data.

NBES members also discussed the draft of their five-year report on IES (due out in November 2008). The draft report seeks to address three issues: the success of IES in advancing the rigor of education research, the success of IES in increasing the relevance and usefulness of education research, and the ways in which IES has facilitated evidence-based decision making. The key message that emerged from the draft is that there has been a sea change in federally funded research for education since 2002 and the way in which the education community is able to access statistical information (via IES) about U.S. education.

To learn more about NBES, visit <http://ies.ed.gov/director/board/index.asp>. To learn more about the MDRC afterschool evaluation, visit <http://www.mdrc.org/publications/480/overview.html>. To download the interim Reading First report, visit <http://ncee.ed.gov>.

[Back to top.](#)

5. In Brief

IFEEEO AND REP. FATTAH HOLD BRIEFING ON EDUCATION IN THE 50 STATES

On Monday, the Institute for Educational Equity and Opportunity (IFEEEO) held a congressional briefing with Rep. Chaka Fattah (D-PA) titled, "Education in the 50 States: State Constitutions, Educational Equity and the Role of the Federal Government." The event highlighted IFEEEO's new research report, *Education in the 50 States: A Deskbook of the History of State Constitutions and Laws About Education*. This Deskbook was prepared by legal and American history scholars to trace the country's earliest history of

education in each of the 50 states. Rep. Chaka Fattah opened the briefing by emphasizing the need to focus on the next generation and the 53 million underserved and poor students in the United States who deserve an equitable education with access to resources similar to students in high performing schools and districts. He described this as a “national imperative” in order to maintain the United States’ competitiveness in the global economy. Fattah stated his strong opinion that the federal government *does* have a role in creating a right to education for all students, even though it is not specifically mentioned in the Constitution, and, according to Rep. Fattah, the 50 state educational histories included in the Deskbook provide the evidence. Fattah said there is “amnesia in this country” about the importance of education in our Nation’s history, and the Deskbook is the first publication of its kind that outlines this commitment. To view the report visit: <http://www.ifeeo.org/>.

NEW AMERICA FOUNDATION HOSTS EVENT ON CHILDHOOD OBESITY

On Tuesday, the New America Foundation held a briefing titled, “An Ounce of Prevention: How Early Efforts for Education, Health and Safety Make a Critical Difference in the Well-Being of Children.” The event’s discussion focused on concerns such as childhood obesity, the rise in violence and drug use among youth, and the achievement gap, and explored the most effective preventive measures. Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA) believes that in order to reduce obesity, drop-outs, juvenile delinquency, drug use and teen pregnancy, there must be more money put into prevention. Representative Mike Castle (R-DE) argued that Congress needs to adopt bipartisan “common sense policies” and “eliminate the politics from the discussion” when it comes to health care, education, and the problems facing today’s children and youth. He also believes it is essential to understand the connection between education and health. For more information, visit [http://www.newamerica.net/programs/workforce and family](http://www.newamerica.net/programs/workforce_and_family).

ITIF HOSTS FORUM ON U.S. COMPETITIVENESS IN STEM FIELDS

On Wednesday, the Information and Innovation Foundation (ITIF) held a forum titled, “U.S. Competitiveness in Science and Technology,” to discuss their new brief, *RAND’s Rose-Colored Glasses: How RAND’s Report on U.S. Competitiveness in Science and Technology Gets it Wrong*. This brief critically examines the RAND report, citing methodological and analytical errors within the report’s arguments, ultimately refuting the report’s conclusion: the increasing national concern over U.S. competitiveness internationally in science and technology is essentially unwarranted because the U.S. currently leads the world in these areas. *RAND’s Rose-Colored Glasses* provides an overview of the findings of an ITIF report to be released in November, 2008. For more information on *U.S. Competitiveness in Science and Technology*, visit: <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG674/>. For more information on *RAND’s Rose-Colored Glasses: How RAND’s Report on U.S. Competitiveness in Science and Technology Gets it Wrong*, visit: <http://www.itif.org/index.php?id=174>.

CAP HOSTS EVENT ON MUSIC EDUCATION

On Wednesday, the Center for American Progress (CAP), along with the Music National Service Initiative (MNSi), held a special presentation featuring former Governor Mike Huckabee (R-AR) and Rep. Joe Crowley (D-NY), titled, “How Music Education Can Build a Better America.” Huckabee and Crowley discussed the importance of music and

arts education at the K-12 level; the influence that music and arts education can have in creating well-rounded, disciplined students; and the need to develop a national music and arts education initiative that will hold schools accountable for its implementation. In addition to campaigning for music and arts education, Huckabee and Crowley performed “I Saw Her Standing There,” by the Beatles with Crowley singing and playing guitar, and the Governor on the bass. MNSi also announced the potential creation of a Congressional Music Caucus, chaired by Rep. Crowley, and the launching of MusicianCorps, a program designed to expand access to quality music education. For more information on “How Music Education Can Build a Better America,” visit:

<http://www.americanprogress.org/events/2008/09/musiced.html>. For more information on MNSi and the MusicianCorps, visit: <http://www.musicnationalservice.org/>.

ADAA PASSES SENATE

On Thursday, the Senate passed S. 3406, the *ADA Amendments Act of 2008* by unanimous consent. The legislation aims to expand protection against workplace discrimination for people with disabilities and “overturn” several Supreme Court rulings that curbed such safeguards in the past decade. In June, the House passed its version of the bill, HR 3195, by a vote of 402 to 17. The Senate version built upon the House version and made minor changes to ensure bipartisan support. Before the bill can head to the White House, the bill will go to the House for consideration and passage. If the House accepts the Senate version of the bill, it could reach the President’s desk by the end of the month.

AEE HOSTS BRIEFING ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND DROPOUT PREVENTION

On Friday, the Alliance for Excellent Education (AEE) and The Forum for Education and Democracy sponsored the congressional briefing, “Student Engagement in High School as a Dropout Prevention Strategy.” The AEE event was hosted by Representatives Rubén Hinojosa (D-TX), Bobby Scott (D-VA), Mike Honda (D-CA) and Danny Davis (D-IL), as well as the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Black Caucus and the Asian Pacific American Caucus. The purpose of the briefing was to discuss strategies to improve teacher effectiveness in low-performing high schools; how to improve outcomes for over-age and under-credited students; and lessons learned from high-poverty, high-minority population schools. It is well documented that the country’s high schools are not adequately preparing a large number of graduates for college and/or workplace success. Panelists argued that schools must redesign the organization of teaching and learning to create stronger ties to students most in need of engagement and support. Linda Darling-Hammond, Ph.D, a convener of the Forum and a board member of AEE, put forth policy recommendations based on successful strategies already in place in some school around the country. The recommendations include: incentives for the creation and redesign of high schools that can offer more organizational supports for students through greater personalization and guidance; an investment in human resources and policies to train and support teachers and principals; support for more forward-looking curriculum reflecting 21st century skills; the redesign of funding so the flow of money to schools is based on student needs; and accountability assessments that keep kids in school and focus on performance as well as knowledge. For more information

about the event go to:

http://www.all4ed.org/events/studentengagement_HSDropoutprevention

RESOURCES FOR MATH TEACHERS

Following the release of the National Mathematics Advisory Panel (NMAP) report, *Foundations for Success*, the U.S. Department of Education's Teach-to-Teacher Initiative recently developed a list of resources designed to help teachers have a "successful and productive school year." The report focuses on improving pre-K through eighth-grade algebra in order to improve achievement in higher levels of mathematics. Included in the Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative resource list is an informational movie that teachers can share with parents on the recommendations of the NMAP. Additionally, NMAP is offering parents a brochure summarizing the findings of their report. For more information, visit: <https://www.t2tweb.us>.

[Back to top.](#)

6. New Publications

"Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 2006" National Center for Education Statistics (September 2008).

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008053.pdf>

"School Vouchers and Student Achievement: Recent Evidence, Remaining Questions" National Center on the Study of Privatization in Education (September 2008).

http://ncspe.org/publications_files/OP163.pdf

"Toward a Systemic Evidence-Base for Science in Out-of-School Time: The Role of Assessment" Noyce Foundation (September 2008).

<http://www.pearweb.org/research/pdfs/Assessment+of+Science+in+OST.pdf>

"The Impact of Homework on Student Achievement" Royal Economic Society (September 2008).

<http://www.res.org.uk/journals/abstracts.asp?ref=1368-4221&vid=11&iid=2&aid=244>

"Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices" Institute for Education Sciences Practice Guides (September 2008).

http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/adlit_pg_082608.pdf

"Rose-Colored Glasses: How RAND's Report on U.S. Competitiveness in Science and Technology Gets it Wrong" Information and Innovation Foundation (September 2008).

<http://www.itif.org/index.php?id=174>.

"Education in the 50 States: A Deskbook of the History of State Constitutions and Laws About Education" Institute for Educational Equity and Opportunity (September 2008).

<http://www.ifeeo.org/id6.html>

[Back to top.](#)

7. In the News

“Senate Measure Would Expand Disabilities Act” New York Times (9/12/08).

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/12/washington/12rights.html?scp=1&sq=american%20with%20disabilities%20act&st=cse>

“Chairman of the N.E.A. to Step Down in January” New York Times (9/12/08).

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/12/arts/12nea.html?scp=1&sq=gioia&st=cse>

“McCain’s ‘Education’ Spot is Dishonest, Deceptive” Washington Post (9/11/08).

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/10/AR2008091003838.html>

“Programs Recruit Young, Inexperienced Grads to Teach in New Orleans” USA Today (9/11/08).

http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2008-09-10-new-orleans-teachers_N.htm?loc=interstitialskip

“Teachers Union Initiates School Reform Plan” USA Today (9/10/08).

http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2008-09-10-aft-plan_N.htm

“Obama Looks to Lessons from Chicago in His National Education Plan” New York Times (9/10/08).

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/10/us/politics/10educate.html?_r=2&ref=education&oref=slogin&oref=slogin

“McCain Calls for Limited U.S. Role in Schools” New York Times (9/10/08).

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/10/us/politics/10schools.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

“Fewer California Students Pass High School Exit Exam” Los Angeles Times (9/10/08).

<http://www.latimes.com/news/education/la-me-exam10-2008sep10,0,6412168.story>

“How One’s ‘Number Sense’ Helps with Mathematics” Washington Post (9/9/08).

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/07/AR2008090701899.html>

[Back to top.](#)

8. 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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- Policy Research and Analysis
- Strategic Planning
- Grassroots Activities
- Association Management

- Meeting and Conference Planning

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