

JUNE 19, 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

This week, appropriators moved into high gear to get the ball rolling on the FY 2010 budget. This activity sparked controversy on both sides of the aisle. The House Rules Committee, for the first time in many years, brought a spending bill to the floor with restrictions on allowable amendments. The Republicans cried foul, accusing the Majority party of thwarting the “will of the people” by limiting their ability to amend the legislation. The Democrats fought back. Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey (D-WI) accused the Minority of “filibuster by amendment” and said that the filing of over 100 proposed changes to the bill that would require debate, was the reason the Rules Committee imposed restrictions. Obey claimed that if this trend continues for twelve of the appropriations measures, it would take endless hours of debate to get a budget adopted by the Congress. By week’s end, despite the heated rhetoric, the Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations bill—the first to be debated in the House—passed on a vote of 259-157. Several other appropriations measures moved through the committee process, putting the House on track to meet their self-imposed August Recess deadline.

The controversies did not end there. Chairman Obey also picked a fight with colleagues in both parties by refusing to include what he called “monuments to me” earmarks in any of the appropriations measure that would come before the Congress this year. Members were outraged that projects such as the Maxine Waters Employment Preparation Center or the John Murtha Airport would no longer be eligible for non-competitive federal funding. Republicans were highly amused by this turn of events, and it is likely that Chairman Obey will prevail.

The House of Representatives also spent time this week debating the emergency war supplemental bill. Securing enough votes for passage after several months of contentious wrangling between the Congress and the White House was considered a victory for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and the President. The bill moved to the Senate and was

quickly adopted on Thursday, following a week of very public disagreements about provisions that apparently were resolved to most everyone's satisfaction. As is often the case, the disagreements had little to do with the substance of the legislation. Members argued about funding for the International Monetary Fund, the release of more controversial war photos and \$1 billion for a so-called "cash for clunkers" bill designed to help struggling car dealers reduce their inventory.

Also in the Senate, Members met on Thursday afternoon to announce the 302B allocations for the 12 appropriations subcommittees in that chamber. This action tells subcommittee Chairmen how much money they have to divvy up among federal agencies. The Senate Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Subcommittee allocation--\$163.1 billion—was somewhat higher than the amount provided to its House counterpart, but writing a bill that satisfies the Congress and the White House will remain a challenge. There simply will not be enough money to fund new priorities promoted by the President and preserve popular programs the President wants to eliminate, but that enjoy support from legislators.

Progress on the budget front was overshadowed by a mark-up of healthcare reform legislation in the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee. This was a sober and highly partisan event as the Congressional Budget Office announced early in the week that the cost of the healthcare reform bill before the Committee would approach a staggering \$1.5 trillion, and only increase the number of covered individuals by approximately 16 million. The House Education and Labor Committee had its own controversies to contend with as they spent the week working hard at drafting reconciliation legislation that will revamp the federal student loan program. A mark-up is anticipated next week.

Also of interest to education advocates was the selection of Congressman John Kline (R-MN) as the new Ranking Republican on the House Education and Labor Committee. Kline is a staunch conservative who strongly supports full funding for special education and the expansion of charter schools. He is serving his 4th term in the Congress, having been a consultant, a farmer and a member of the Marine Corps before his election to the House of Representatives.

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2. ED Hosts Stakeholder Meeting

This week, the Department of Education invited education stakeholders to a meeting at Department headquarters to discuss their progress on several initiatives, plans for coming weeks and months and to introduce the senior leadership of the Department to the community.

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan welcomed the group with remarks similar to those of recent months on the "unique opportunity" before education reformers before introducing his Chief of Staff, Margot Rodgers, who then introduced the agency's senior staff. Joe Conaty, Director of the Academic Improvement and Teacher Quality Programs in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, then gave the group an update on the Department of Education's progress to date on distribution of the funds made available for education in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Those in the audience who had hoped for details around guidance and plans for awarding Race to the Top and the What Works and Innovation Funds beyond the ED press release from earlier in the week were disappointed.

ED plans to hold similar stakeholder meetings monthly and promised more detail on those awards at the July meeting.

Conaty did say that regarding the State Fiscal Stabilization Funds (SFSF), forty-one states have applied, 32 applications have been approved, and ED expects to receive remaining applications by the July 1 deadline. As these applications are approved, they are posted on ED's web site. He noted that of the ARRA SFSF funds going to states for education, states are investing 80 percent of the money they receive in K-12 education and 20 percent in higher education, on average. He also told attendees to expect a significant volume of notices and guidance to become available on ED's website in coming days and weeks.

Carmel Martin, Assistant Secretary for Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, gave the audience a broad overview of ED's FY 2010 budget request and the Department's plans for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. She said that ED leadership and their allies on Capitol Hill are working toward enactment of a new bill by the end of the 111th Congress. She and her colleagues urged the stakeholders in the room to meet with ED and Hill staff to convey their concerns and recommendations as Secretary Duncan and his team, as well as long-time career staff at the agency work to "raise the bar and close the gap at the same time." For more information on ED's ARRA plans and guidance, visit <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/index.html>.

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3. In Brief

DUNCAN ANNOUNCES FUNDS FOR STATES TO DEVELOP ASSESSMENTS LINKED TO STANDARDS AND RACE TO THE TOP FUND TIMELINE

On Monday, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan gave his second of four major policy speeches on the priorities for the Race to the Top Fund. During his speech to the nation's governors, Duncan announced that the Department of Education will commit up to \$350 million of the Race to the Top Fund to support states in the creation of "rigorous assessments linked to the internationally benchmarked common standards being developed by states." He also applauded the 46 states and three territories that recently agreed to develop common standards as a means to prepare American students to compete and succeed in the global market place. Secretary Duncan will give two more major policy speeches leading up to the request for proposals. Duncan also announced that the Race to the Top Fund grants will be made in two rounds which will allow states that miss the first round, to reapply. In late July, ED will publish a notice of proposed rulemaking, inviting public comment for 30 days on the proposed grant application and evaluation criteria. In October, a notice inviting applications will be published in the Federal Register and the first phase of applications will be due in December with grants awarded in March 2010. In June of 2010, the second phase of applications will be due and grants will be awarded in September 2010. For more information visit: <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2009/06/06152009a.html>

NAGB RELEASES ARTS ASSESSMENT

On Monday, the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) released its most recent assessment of 8th grade student skills in music and visual arts. This was the first arts assessment in more than a decade. Approximately 7,900 students took part in the assessment

in schools across the nation. Overall, the news on the assessment was mixed. While the frequency of arts instruction has remained constant over the decade, racial, gender and socioeconomic disparities were apparent. Stuart Kerachsky, Acting Chair of the National Center for Education Statistics at the Department of Education, spoke about the visual arts portion of the assessment, saying activities were divided into two categories—responding to art that was presented and creating visual art work in the form of self-portraits. Patricia Walker Powell, acting head of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), applauded NAGB for conducting the assessment and the good news she believes the findings reflect. According to Powell, 77 percent of 8th graders have the benefit of arts specialists in their schools. Powell said participation in the arts contributes to positive civic engagement among adults once they graduate from high school and many other intangible benefits. For a complete copy of the report go to <http://nationsreportcard.gov>

AIR RELEASES REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKING

On Tuesday, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) released a new report titled, “The Second Derivative: International Benchmarks in Mathematics for U.S. States and School Districts”. The report presents a new grading index that allows states and school districts to rank students with international peers using an easily comprehensible grading system. Vice President of AIR, Dr. Gary Phillips, outlined how the index was created, the findings, and the implications for further research. This new indexing crosswalks scaled scores on well known international tests of knowledge in mathematics, such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test commonly used in the United States. By converting data reported on these three measures, to well understood letter grades scores of A, B, C, D and E, Phillips attempts to make this information more widely accessible to policymakers, educators, parents and students themselves. The news for the United States remains alarming, regardless of the reporting system. Fourth graders in only a handful of states received a grade of B or B- when compared with students internationally. Moving to 8th grade scores, grades for this same handful of states, drops to a C for all states except Massachusetts. For a copy of the full report go to www.air.org

EDUCATION AND LABOR COMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

On Tuesday, the House Education and Labor Committee held a hearing to examine how technology and innovative education tools are transforming and improving education. The hearing featured witnesses who discussed how technology is, or could be, used in classrooms. Chairman George Miller (D-CA) opened the hearing with comments outlining the importance of giving teachers and young people the tools they need to teach and learn. Noting that, “Today’s students use technology in everything they do,” Miller pointed to the absurdity of limiting young people’s access to the technology they use outside of the school day in the classroom. He said, “Research shows that when technology is systemically integrated into classrooms and used by digitally-savvy staff, it can improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement, and reduce the dropout rate.” Aneesh Chopra from the White House Office for Science and Technology asserted that education reform efforts must integrate technology into the classroom “in ways that research demonstrates truly help students learn”. Chopra identified a number of “promising approaches”, including: facilitating public-private partnerships in the development of new curriculum incorporating emerging technologies;

integrating technology throughout the classroom to transform teaching methods; deploying collaboration tools to support teachers in sharing best practices; and developing better student assessments to allow teachers and parents to make data-driven decisions on how to improve performance. Testimony from the hearing, and a recorded webcast, are available at <http://edlabor.house.gov/hearings/2009/06/the-future-of-learning-how-tec.shtml>

GATES ENTERS THE POSTSECONDARY REALM

On Tuesday, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Library of Congress hosted a policy forum titled, “Beyond Access: Groups Unite to Put Completing College on the National Agenda.” The purpose of the event was to announce the Gates Foundation’s new focus on ensuring postsecondary education results in a degree or certificate with genuine economic value. According to Hilary Pennington, Director of Education, Postsecondary Initiatives in the Foundation’s United States Program, policy makers at the local, state and national levels need to focus on college success and not just college access. She highlighted the “grim” statistics that only about half of college students in the U.S. graduate within six years, and the rate for low-income students is closer to 25 percent, and only about 20 percent of African American and Hispanics aged 25-34 have earned some kind of postsecondary degree. As a result, the Foundation has set its goal “to help the nation double the number of low-income adults who earn postsecondary degrees or credentials by age 26 in order to gain employment that will adequately support their families.” Joining in the discussion were new Gates’ grantees: the American Enterprise Institute, The Center for American Progress, the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), The College Board, *Excelencia* in Education, and the Institute for Higher Education Policy. All these national organizations argued that college graduation rates must be considered in the context of a school’s admission criteria and that institutions of higher education must do more to meet the needs of “nontraditional” students and first generation families. While there is broad agreement that the cost of postsecondary education is a huge factor, the new Gates grantees argue it may not be the most important factor. Gates’ efforts will initially be aimed at strengthening policies and practices across the range of postsecondary institutions that enroll the most low-income and minority students. In addition to focusing on improving the performance of the postsecondary education system, supporting young adult success, and encouraging U.S. leaders to commit to helping students complete their degrees, Gates will also remain committed to improving and increasing data and information and supporting innovation to help transform the system. For more information, go to: <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/topics/Pages/postsecondary-education.aspx>.

DLC HOSTS DISCUSSION ON EDUCATION REFORM

On Wednesday, the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) hosted a panel discussion on education reform. White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel gave opening remarks and highlighted President Obama’s education and healthcare reform agendas. Emanuel called education reform a “quiet revolution” and stated his belief that the community college system is essential to getting more students through the higher education system and into high quality jobs. Emanuel also strongly emphasized the President’s commitment to early childhood education and preparatory education. Congressman Artur Davis (D-AL) agreed with Emanuel, saying, “The only consistent conveyer belt in American life that can take you from one class to another is the public education system.” He believes that the “conveyer belt” has been under stress from the rising cost of a college education, the rising dropout rate, and the increasing achievement gap between the races. Davis argued that successful education reform

needs innovative ideas that are discussed and financed, saying, “New money simply can not be thrown at an old problem.” Harold Ford, Chairman of the DLC, urged Americans to be open to the idea of charter schools. He expressed his hope that schools look to other schools, including charter schools, as “role models” and adopt the reforms and best practices that are working. Joe Williams, Executive Director of Democrats for Education Reform, agreed and said that “reform is happening” and the Administration is “quietly redefining the role that the Federal government will play in education reform.” To view an archived video of the discussion visit: http://www.dlc.org/ndol_ci.cfm?contentid=255030&kaid=85&subid=108

CEP RELEASES REPORT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

On Wednesday, the Center on Education Policy (CEP) released their latest report on achievement since the enactment of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) titled, “State Test Score Trends Through 2007-08 Part I: Is the Emphasis on ‘Proficiency’ Shortchanging Higher- and Lower-Achieving Students?” Jack Jennings, Founder of CEP, emphasized that this report is the first part of this year’s version of the longitudinal study of state test scores, and focused on: (1) if student achievement has increased under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and (2) if NCLB is shortchanging high and low-achieving students. CEP will release six more reports addressing other issues in the coming months. The report examines the math and reading achievements of students in elementary, middle, and high school who are categorized by their states as “Basic-and-Above,” “Proficient-and-Above,” and “Advanced.” Findings show that under NCLB, student achievement is increasing in all subjects, grade levels, and achievement levels, although “Proficient-and-Above” students are improving slightly more than students in the other two groups. Jennings said that while it is possible this gap in improvement is because high- and low-achieving students are not receiving as much attention as their proficient peers from their teachers, statistical uncertainty precludes a definitive conclusion of whether high- and low-level students are being shortchanged. To view the full report visit: <http://tiny.cc/SFTUP>

HOPE HOLDS GLOBAL FINANCIAL LITERACY SUMMIT

On Wednesday, Operation HOPE held its first Global Financial Literacy Summit in Washington, D.C., bringing representatives together from around the world to discuss the importance of financial literacy during the current global economic crisis. As one of the worlds largest non-profit organizations committed to spreading financial literacy and helping to economically empower underserved communities, Operation HOPE held the summit to “promote financial literacy as a global civil right that can empower people worldwide and stabilize the global economy.” Among the summit’s many events, a “Global Town Hall” was held to discuss financial literacy models from around the world, as well as various views on the importance and methods of implementing financial literacy programs. Additionally, a briefing was held on “Financial Literacy and the Education System; Making Education Aspirationally Relevant.” During this briefing, panelists representing various organizations and interest groups discussed the methods being used to spread the important message of financial literacy to elementary, secondary, and higher education students and teachers. Panelists emphasized the importance of partnerships between the government and private institutions and encouraged educators to combine financial literacy with activities that relate to kids’ interests. The panelists also lauded the work done by the President’s Advisory Council on Financial Literacy and recommended that they be charged with the task of developing a relevant financial literacy curriculum for teachers. For more information on the Global Financial Literacy Summit, visit: <http://summit09.operationhope.org/>.

AACTE HOSTS BRIEFING ON TEACHER PREPARATION REFORM

On Thursday, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) held a congressional briefing titled, "Innovation and Reform in Teacher Preparation." During the briefing, panelists examined new approaches in higher education and at the state level to recruit and train highly effective teachers. Lynne Weisenbach, Vice Chancellor of the P-16 Initiatives for Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia discussed two of Georgia's successful innovations, including leveraging web-based teaching and creating a residency program for teachers. Patricia Wasley, Dean of the College of Education at University of Washington discussed the National Assessment of Teacher Performance's (NATP) assessment process, which contains three sub-assessments, allowing reviewers to determine how a new teacher works with children, with subject matter, and with disabled and ELL students. Mayra Bravo-Gonzalez, a teacher candidate in the Grow Your Own (GYO) Illinois program stressed the importance of the GYO program in generating a diverse teaching workforce that wants to remain teachers in their communities. For more information visit: <http://www.aacte.org>.

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4. New Publications

"Uncertain Times 2009: Recession Imperiling Afterschool Programs and the Children They Serve" Afterschool Alliance (June 2009).

<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/UncertainTimes2009.cfm>

"The Nation's Report Card: 2008 Arts Music and Visual Arts at Grade 8" National Center for Education Statistics (June 2009).

<http://nationsreportcard.gov/>

"State Test Score Trends Through 2007-08 Part I: Is the Emphasis on 'Proficiency' Shortchanging Higher- and Lower-Achieving Students?" Center on Education Policy (June 2009).

<http://tiny.cc/SFTUP>

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5. In the News

"Collin Powell, Foot Soldiers, Battle America's Dropout Catastrophe" CNN (6/18/09).

<http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/06/18/bia.saving.desmond/index.html>

"Why Does the Mountain Have to Come to Middle School" Washington Post (6/18/09).

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/16/AR2009061603386.html>

"Colleges Strive to Ensure Intellectual Diversity" USA Today (6/17/09).

http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2009-06-17-college-free-speech_N.htm

"Success at Small Schools Has a Price, Report Says" New York Times (6/16/09).

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/17/nyregion/17small.html?_r=1&ref=education

“Education Chief Offers Cash Incentives to Develop Standards” Boston Globe (6/15/09).
http://www.boston.com/news/education/k_12/articles/2009/06/15/education_secretary_of_fers_cash_incentives_to_develop_common_standards/

“Study Finds Instruction in Arts Lags in 8th Grade” New York Times (6/15/09).
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/16/education/16scores.html?ref=education>

“Educators Seek Ways to Prevent Learning Loss During Vacation” Washington Post (6/15/09).
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/14/AR2009061402427.html>

“What to Read?” Washington Post (6/15/09).
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/14/AR2009061402426.html>

“Grading Column’s Freshmen Year” Washington Post (6/15/09).
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/14/AR2009061402425.html?sid=ST2009061402437>

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6. About WPLLC

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

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