



Early Education Policy Update

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The following memo provides a summary of a recent study evaluating the effects of the economic downturn on children's access to preschools.

This Week in Washington

Congress reconvened on Monday after its Independence Day recess, and the House of Representatives continued to take action marking up its appropriation bills. As part of the Emergency Supplemental which passed on July 1st, the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, John Spratt (D-SC), proposed a “budget enforcement resolution” – instead of a traditional budget resolution – and it passed the House by a vote of 215 – 210. While this “budget enforcement resolution” sets discretionary spending for Fiscal Year 2011 at \$1.2 trillion, \$7 billion less than President Obama’s budget proposal, it is unlike traditional budget resolutions because it does not outline where specifically these cuts should be made.

Additionally, the Office of Management and Budget has issued a statement requiring all federal agencies to slash their budgets by five percent for the Fiscal Year 2011 through 2012. While the federal budget is feeling squeezed, and the current political climate has the general public enraged about the growing federal deficit and the nation’s fiscal solvency, there will be great pressure on Appropriators to freeze or reduce domestic spending in the 12 bills they will produce in the next few months.

Tomorrow, Thursday, July 15th, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies is expected to mark up the Department of Education’s appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2011. Given the budget enforcement resolution that passed the House, and the fact that overall spending will be less than what was requested by President Obama, education advocates are hopeful that at least some education programs will receive increases in the bill or at least funded at Fiscal Year 2010 levels, avoiding the cuts that so many discretionary programs may face in this current climate. In addition, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies is rumored to be marking up its bill on Thursday, July 22nd. WPLL will be sending out information on the House’s mark up as soon as information becomes available.

Attend ED Reading Institute Remotely

The 2010 U.S. Department of Education Reading Institute will be held July 19 to 21 in Anaheim, CA. Registration for the event is free and open to all those working in the area of literacy instruction. New this year, seven conference sessions will be available to watch online and will allow for remote participation. Additionally, the National Title I Association has compiled references and prepared abstracts based on information provided by Institute presenters. Early learning and development participants are encouraged to review information prior to the conference. For a list of featured sessions with online access and a link for registration, visit: <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2010/07/ed-reading-institute-july-19-21/>.

House Ed Labor Committee Holds Hearing on the Improving Nutrition for America's Children Act

On Thursday, July 1, the House Education and Labor Committee held a hearing to examine the possible impact of the *Improving Nutrition for America's Children Act* (H.R. 5504). Chairman George Miller (D-CA) opened the hearing with familiar statistics: nearly 1 in 3 children are obese and 16 million children are hungry. "If we do nothing, if we allow these children's health to deteriorate, and jeopardize their success in school, we compromise their ability to grow into healthy, productive adults," the Chairman stated. He also highlighted four specific areas H.R. 5504 aims to improve. This includes: 1) streamlining and increasing access to nutritious foods during the school day; 2) improving food safety in schools; 3) increasing the reimbursement rate of school meals; and 4) providing year-round access to nutritious foods. Ranking Member John Kline (R-MN) remarked that while he believes that improving child nutrition is a "worthy investment," he is concerned about the cost and claims that creating new programs without offsets is "irresponsible." The first witness to testify was Thomas Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture, who began by explaining his first charge, after being appointed Secretary by President Obama, was to improve childhood nutrition, and he is working to do just that. He emphasized that when children are hungry, they cannot learn and reach their potential. This is especially problematic in the globally competitive world that exists today. Finding offsets is a top priority to the US Department of Agriculture because the "country is only as strong as its youth," and children require nutritious meals to be productive citizens. Among the other voices heard on the second witness panel, Robert Rector, a Senior Research Fellow of Welfare and Family Issues at The Heritage Foundation, provided an alternative perspective. According to Rector, around 14 million of the lowest income families with children will receive \$33,000 in welfare spending in fiscal year 2011. As a result, he urged the Committee to determine the effectiveness of the 70 other programs aimed at low-income families before increasing the nation's debt with even more programs to benefit these families. The other witnesses expressed their continuing support of H.R. 5504 and urged Congress to pass it before the August recess. At the conclusion of the hearing, Chairman Miller announced there will be a markup of the bill the week after the House returns from the July 4th recess. For more information including a recording of the hearing, go to: <http://edlabor.house.gov/hearings/2010/07/hr5504-improving-nutrition-for.shtml>.

New ED Partnership Reframes Parent Engagement

On Wednesday, June 30, the U.S. Department of Education (ED), United Way Worldwide, National PTA, SEDL and the Harvard Family Research Project Center hosted the second Webinar in a four-part series called, "Achieving Excellence and Innovation in Family, School and Community Engagement." The goal of the series, according to Anna Hinton, Director of

Parental Options and Information at ED's office of Innovation and Improvement, "is for stakeholders at the state, district and school levels to explore how to reframe parent engagement to build sustained and systematic strategies." Hinton also stressed the need to move to a "research-based" definition of family and community engagement that includes efforts driven by data and research as opposed to "random and piecemeal activities." Thelma Melendez Santa de Santa Ana, Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education, asserted that family engagement is key to ensuring all children learn and succeed, and as such, is an important factor in ED's overall school reform efforts. She noted that the Administration's Blueprint to Reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) includes enhanced transparency for parents in the areas of school climate and academic performance, as well as an emphasis on a more systemic integration of family engagement strategies to a school's overall efforts to increase student achievement. Additionally, in early May, ED proposed to double the amount of federal funds set aside for family involvement from 1 to 2 percent of Title I dollars and another \$145 million for competitive grants to Parent Information and Resource Centers, districts and community-based organizations under an optional Family Engagement and Responsibility Fund. Melendez also stressed the need for strong state-level partnerships to help increase the capacity of schools through technical assistance and targeted Title I funding in an effort to link family engagement strategies to student success. One such example highlighted in the Webinar is the successful partnership between the Maryland State Department of Education and the Maryland State Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC). According to Barbara Scherr, Family Involvement Coordinator, and Susan Shaffer, Director of the Maryland PIRC, the culture of partnership and purpose from the State Education Agency down to the principal and teacher levels has enabled family engagement policies to be embedded in all education programs and efforts throughout the state. Fundamentally, family engagement is viewed as an essential ingredient to meeting a school's academic goals, strengthening community, building human capacity and increasing parents' knowledge so they can identify areas of need while also contributing back to the school. For more information about the Webinar series go to: http://www.nationalpirc.org/engagement_webinars/.

New Early Education Section Added to the Department's ESEA Reauthorization Blueprint

An early childhood education section has been added to the Administration's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Reauthorization Blueprint. The addendum expresses a commitment to a seamless transition between preschool and elementary school and support for a "continuum of learning" to close the achievement gap and to ensure high school graduation and college-and career-readiness for every student. Proposals incorporated in the document include a continued use of Title I funds to provide high-quality preschool support; a birth-through-college-to-career agenda with Promise Neighborhood grants providing services, support, and reform opportunities to improve education and life outcomes for children in high-need communities; comprehensive education reforms; and encouragement for innovation in early learning through the Investing in Innovation (i3) program. To view this document, visit: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/faq/early-learning.pdf>.

Child Trends Releases Two New Resources

Review of School Readiness Practices in the States: Early Learning Guidelines and Assessments, a new Child Trends brief released June 17, provides an overview of state Early Learning Guidelines as well as efforts and policy considerations in monitoring, tracking and supporting school readiness levels at the state level. *Home Visiting Application Process: A Guide for Planning State Needs*, a guide released June 30 to assist states applying for federal home visiting grants, outlines important steps in the grant application process and provides

crucial national and state level data to aid applicants conducting needs assessments, selecting and measuring benchmarks, and identifying high-risk populations. The guide is not all-inclusive in terms of the steps required for grant applications and should not be used as a checklist. Official guidance is available from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau. The guide is available at: www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2010_06_30_Home_Visiting_Guide.pdf. The brief is available at: www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2010_06_18_ECH_SchoolReadiness.pdf.

Poll Finds Voters Support ESEA Reauthorization

More than half of voters will partly base their electoral decisions in the upcoming 2010 congressional elections on whether incumbents take action on reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), according to a new poll from the Alliance for Excellent Education. The telephone poll, which surveyed 1,000 likely voters last month, also found that improving public high schools through the reauthorization will be an issue for voters in the next decade. According to the poll, 69 percent of voters believe that a high dropout rate has a significant impact on the nation's economy, and 65 percent of respondents said that the dropout rate affected the nation's ability to compete in the global economy. Yet, most respondents said that high schools do a poor job of preparing students for college and the workforce. The poll found 69 percent of respondents said that a high school diploma does not prepare graduates to secure a soundly remunerative job, and less than half of voters believe that a high school diploma prepares graduates to succeed in college. The poll's findings are available at: www.all4ed.org/publication_material/July2010Poll.