



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

Today many education advocates around the city were celebrating the fact that the Senate finally found enough votes to invoke cloture on an Education Jobs Fund amendment sponsored by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Senator Patty Murray (D-WA). The \$10 billion amendment purports to save approximately 140,000 education jobs and also provides \$16.1 billion to states for increased Medicaid FMAP funding to help states avoid massive layoffs and cuts to vital social services. The funding will be distributed to states by formula. According to Senator Murray's office, "This funding will ensure our children are not bearing the burden of local budget shortfalls. It will keep class sizes down and make certain that students have access to crucial academic services such as librarians, afterschool programs, and assistance for students with disabilities." The \$26.1 billion amendment is offset by spending cuts in other areas including a cut of \$50 million in FY 2010 spending for the comprehensive literacy program called Striving Readers—putting the program at \$200 million; an \$82 million cut in Student Financial Aid Administration, reducing funding from \$870.4 million to \$788.4 million; and eliminating altogether FY 2010 funds for the \$10.7 million Ready to Teach program. The amendment needed 60 votes for cloture, and it passed on a bipartisan vote of 61-38. A vote on final passage of the amendment is expected to pass easily tomorrow as only 51 votes are needed. Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) is calling the House of Representatives back to DC early next week so they can pass the legislation, which will then go to President Obama for signature.

The Senate was also very busy last week preparing an FY 2011 budget. As reported last week, mark-ups were held throughout the week at the subcommittee and full committee level. For the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education, the bill unveiled last Tuesday provides \$1 billion less than the President requested for the year. However the news was good for early childhood advocates as the bill includes \$300 million for a new Early Learning Challenge Fund that will provide competitive grants to states to raise the bar for early childhood Programs; an increase of \$1 billion to the Child Care Development Block Grant; and an increase to Head Start of \$990.3 million over the FY 2010 appropriation. This amount will allow Head Start programs to provide comprehensive early childhood development services to 978,000 low-income children. The President's top priorities—Race to the Top, the Investing in Innovation

(i3) Fund and Teacher Incentive Fund programs receive generous allocations, though not as much as was requested. Title I and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)—top Subcommittee priorities—also received increases. The 21st Century Learning Centers Program would get a \$100 million increase from the bill, but language giving states the option to use these funds to support a longer school day created controversy among providers.

After sitting through votes on three bills during the full Committee markup, including the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education bill, where Democrats and Republicans alike praised their colleagues, spoke about important programs and then split ranks on party lines, Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) expressed her frustration with the process. This led to a long discussion about the \$6 billion top line disagreement that was forcing all Republicans to say no to all FY 2011 spending bills. The total \$302 billion allocation this year is \$14 billion below the President's request for the federal budget, but Republicans have said this reduction in federal spending is an inadequate cut in the face of the current fiscal crisis.

The future of the bill remains uncertain as few legislative days remain on the calendar. Chairman Harkin himself acknowledged that final passage of the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education spending bill, often the most controversial of the spending bills, might have to wait until the beginning of the 112th Congress.

Secretary Duncan and President Obama Tout Reform Efforts

Education policy makers and advocates in Washington, DC also had a hard time keeping up with the world of education policy last week as key officials, including the President himself, gave speeches around town touting the administration education priorities and accomplishments. This included Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's Tuesday speech at the National Press Club, his remarks at the National Urban League's conference on Wednesday, and President Barack Obama's remarks on education reform at the National Urban League's conference on Thursday. The President's speech was of particular interest, since, on Monday, a coalition of civil rights groups, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League, released a framework for education reform that criticized "the limited reach of the Race to the Top Fund and other market-based frames for federal education funding." It is no secret that the President and Secretary Duncan believe that this program is revolutionary for K-12 public education, and the framework's criticisms reportedly came as a surprise to the administration.

Secretary Duncan and President Obama refuted the framework's and other claims in their remarks. Noting that the \$4.3 billion Race to the Top (RTTT) program represents less than 1 percent of all K-12 money spent each year, Secretary Duncan and President Obama asserted that the reforms the program has and will create will be particularly important to low-income and minority students. Further, during his remarks before the National Urban League, Secretary Duncan announced that, in an effort to address fiscal inequities in K-12 schools, the Department of Education is establishing a new "Equity and Excellence Commission." This 15-member panel "will obtain broad public input about inequities in K-12 education and examine how those inequities contribute to the achievement gap."

During the President's Thursday remarks, before a surprisingly friendly audience given the way the week began, he commented on the country's persistent achievement gap, saying, "[W]hen it comes to black students, African American students trail not only almost every other developed nation abroad, but they badly trail their white classmates here at home -- an achievement gap that is widening the income gap between black and white, between rich and poor...[T]his status quo

is morally inexcusable, it's economically indefensible, and all of us are going to have to roll up our sleeves to change it." He asserted that RTTT and the Investing in Innovation (i3) program were important to these efforts and suggested that criticism of these efforts "reflects a general resistance to change." He went on to say, "We get comfortable with the status quo even when the status quo isn't good. We make excuses for why things have to be the way they are. And when you try to shake things up, some people aren't happy." President Obama also spoke about the importance of well-prepared, effective teachers, but said that accountability is important. He supports measures of teacher effectiveness that include multiple factors, including test scores and other evaluative factors. He also called for reform in assessments to produce a "real time" evaluation of student progress versus a "snapshot."

The President and Secretary's positions on the competitive grant programs that came out of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) are well known in education policy circles. Perhaps more noteworthy was that neither of them mentioned a timetable for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, suggesting that they know that action this year on Capitol Hill is unlikely.

For the text of President Obama's speech, visit: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-education-reform-national-urban-league-centennial-conference>. For the Department's announcement regarding the new Commission, visit <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/duncan-highlights-education-departments-civil-rights-agenda>. For information on the Framework released by the civil rights groups, visit <http://www.otlcampaign.org/resources/civil-rights-framework-providing-all-students-opportunity-learn-through-reauthorization-el>. To read Duncan's National Press Club speech visit: www.ed.gov/news/speeches/quiet-revolution-secretary-arne-duncan-remarks-national-press-club or to view ED's press release on RTTT visit: <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/18-states-and-dc-named-finalists-race-top>.

Duncan and Sebelius Announce the Early Learning Interagency Policy Board

On Tuesday the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, and Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, launched the Early Learning Interagency Policy Board during the Early Childhood 2010: Innovation for the Next Generation conference held in Washington, D.C. August 3 and 4. The intention of the conference, which hosted state and local partners from a myriad of early childhood programs within the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education, along with other stakeholders and federal staff, was to continue the work to improve collaborations and partnerships at the federal, state and community levels in support of integrated early childhood systems. The goal of the newly formed Policy Board is to foster better collaboration of research, data systems and general effectiveness of all programs between the two departments. "This marks an important step in our effort to help eliminate silos at the federal level," said Secretary Duncan. "We want to ensure that collaboration at the federal level mirrors the integration you're striving to achieve at the state and local levels." To read more about this conference visit: <http://www.earlychildhood2010.org/>.

Winners of the i3 Grants Announced

Today, the Department of Education mistakenly announced the 49 winners of the \$650 million i3 grant competition a day early! Four groups won scale-up awards worth up to \$50 million; 15 won validation awards of up to \$30 million; and 30 won development grants of up to \$5 million. These winners still have one more hurdle to overcome – securing a 20-percent private-sector match by September 8th, a requirement to win. For a list of winning applications go to: [http://www.edweek.org/media/blog_mcnail_84_i3hra\(pdf\).pdf](http://www.edweek.org/media/blog_mcnail_84_i3hra(pdf).pdf).

The Child Poverty Rate is On the Rise

The Annie E. Casey Foundation released its annual KIDS COUNT Data Book on Wednesday, July 28th, which provides state-by-state rankings and measures of the latest child well-being data. According to the data released, the rate of children living in poverty in 2008 was 18 percent which equals one million more children living in poverty when compared with the data retrieved in 2000. In addition, the 2008 data was collected before the economy bottomed out and therefore, in the next report, this rate is expected to rise significantly. Strides were seen, however, with the decrease in the teen birth rate and an increase of teens across the largest racial and ethnic groups either attending school or already obtaining a high school diploma or GED when compared with teens in 2000. To read this report visit:

<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/DataBook/2010/Default.aspx>.

Chairman Miller Featured at National Journal Event

At a Wednesday, July 28th, event hosted by *National Journal* focused on education policy, House Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller (D-CA) was interviewed on by Eliza Krigman, the publication's education reporter. The interview covered a wide range of education policy issues of interest. Following her own opening remarks that outlined the distressing performance of American students relative to their international peers, Krigman asked Miller about the effectiveness of the Obama Administration's top priority, the Race to the Top (RTTT) program. Miller deemed the program "very effective." He credited the availability of RTTT funding with pushing state legislatures to "throw off old boundaries" in terms of teacher evaluations and linking student test scores to classroom teachers; the spread of charter schools; and encouraging the current debate around a reformed Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Krigman turned next to the reauthorization of the ESEA and asked if Congress was "stalled" on this undertaking. Miller acknowledged that the timetable was "as soon as possible" versus a certain date. He said work would continue through August. According to Miller, he met recently with Committee Members and sensed a "different political chemistry" toward the reauthorization, and he remained hopeful about the process. In response to Krigman's question about the Blueprint for Reauthorization of ESEA that the Department of Education had proposed earlier this year, Miller said there was pushback in some areas—in particular the four turn around models that apply to persistently low performing schools, despite his belief that some schools are simply "bad" and need to be closed. A final question about the supplemental spending bill that had passed recently in the Senate absent the \$10 billion Education Jobs Fund provoked Miller to call the Senate "dysfunctional" because Republicans had apparently made a pact to "just say no." Miller said kids would be the casualty if the Congress can't find a way to help struggling districts avoid major layoffs in the coming weeks. For more on the event, visit:

<http://edlabor.house.gov/blog/2010/07/chairman-miller-keynotes-a-nat.shtml>.

Senators Kerry, Lincoln and Representative Crowley Sponsor Bills to Increase Mandatory Funding for Child Care Block Grant

Last Thursday, July 29th, Senators John Kerry (D-MA) and Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) and Representative Joseph Crowley (D-NY) introduced companion bills S.3667 and H.R.5938, called the Children First Act of 2010. The legislation would increase mandatory funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) by \$800 million up from the current \$2.9 million. This certainly is a tall order since the program hasn't seen an increase in mandatory funding since FY 2007. To read more about this legislation visit: http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=111_cong_bills&docid=f:s3667is.txt.pdf.

Hearing Examines Impact of Federal Policies on Children

Last Thursday, July 29th, Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions' Subcommittee on Children and Families, held the third in a series of hearings on the "State of the American Child" which focused on the impact of federal policies on children. Witnesses from the Departments of Labor, Health, and Human Services and Education, as well as an economist from the White House Council of Economic Advisors, shared information on the programs for children and families implemented by their agencies. According to Dodd, the purpose of these hearings is to examine all aspects of children's lives: their health from birth to adulthood, their educational experiences in and out of the classroom, and their family and community lives, as well as to "examine where we are falling short and to devise strategies for improvement that can endure in the years ahead." This series began earlier this year with a hearing that looked at the challenges facing children and families and the tools they need to succeed in today's society. The second hearing, which was held in Connecticut on Monday, examined Connecticut social service, educational and health programs that provide critical services and assistance to children and families in the state. Even though there has been significant progress over the last three decades in terms of overall child well-being, Dodd and all of the witnesses agreed that the condition of the American child is worsening, especially in the recent economic recession, as evidenced by the growing rate of child poverty, economic and education achievement gaps and health-related problems, such as childhood obesity and low birth weight babies. There was also agreement that the federal government has a critical role to play. Cecilia Rouse of the Council of Economic Advisors said the federal government must, "maintain and accelerate progress through improved access to sound economic strategies that enable parents to provide for their children, quality health care and high quality education from cradle to career." Dodd noted that 20 years ago a National Commission on Children was established which laid out a plan to address the needs of children. This, he asserted, must happen annually and he announced plans to introduce legislation to do just that. This body would gather data, analyze trends, issue an annual report on the state of American children, and make policy recommendations for improving child well-being. To view the complete hearing and read witness statements go to: <http://help.senate.gov/hearings/hearing/?id=fbaacc0c-5056-9502-5dfb-47b05d0d581b>.

Nemours Sponsors Briefing on Obesity Prevention and Early Childhood Education

Last Thursday, July 29th, Nemours, a pediatric health system dedicated to advancing higher standards in children's health, held an event titled, "Healthy Kids, Healthy Future: Obesity Prevention in Early Care and Education," cosponsored by Representatives Michael Castle (R-DE) and Marcia Fudge (D-OH), who made opening remarks. Both Representatives reflected on the importance of legislation to combat and prevent childhood obesity. Representative Fudge stated that she is "hopeful" that solutions will be found for this "labor of love" because obesity prohibits children and adults from living full, active lives, and precludes such activities as sports participation and joining the military. Appropriate and well conceived nutrition policy can "change the lives our young people," according to Fudge. Representative Castle echoed Representative Fudge's sentiments and urged the legislative staff present to encourage their bosses to promote obesity prevention. The panelists then shared information on the current state of child obesity in America; highlighted two programs aimed at decreasing early childhood obesity; and noted specific provisions in both the Senate and House Child Nutrition Act (CNA) reauthorization bills that address childhood obesity. William Dietz, Director of the Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, highlighted the Task Force on Child Obesity's recommendations, which include early childhood recommendations such as

strengthening prenatal care; encouraging breastfeeding; limiting time in front of a television; and increasing physical activity. Debbie Chang, the Vice President of Policy and Prevention for Nemours, described programs implemented in Delaware and north central Florida. Both programs are focused on comprehensive implementation, with partnerships between schools, child care facilities and the community in an effort to ensure a unified approach to instilling positive and healthy habits. Geri Henchi, the Director of Nutrition Policy and Early Childhood Programs for the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), emphasized the proposed programs in the House and Senate CNA reauthorization bills that aim to reduce the paperwork necessary to receive free and reduced price lunch, as well as provide \$10 million from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to allow resources and training to education professionals. Additionally, the House bill, the Improving Nutrition for America's Children Act (H.R. 5504), includes a five state pilot program allowing for an additional meal or snack for children in childcare for more than eight hours. For more information, visit www.healthykidshealthyfuture.com.