

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

Democrats & Republicans: What Happened to Bi-partisanship?

November 4, 2009 was Election Day in some parts of the country and the contests were quickly turned into an assessment of the Obama Presidency.

Two gubernatorial races were being closely contested, and one of them was in a SECA state. On November 4th, Virginia elected a Republican Governor, and handed the Democratic Party the loss of a gubernatorial seat. The voters of New Jersey also changed course and defeated the incumbent Democratic Governor Jon Corzine.

These races were being touted by the political pun-

ditions and media as a test of the “Obama mystique”. President Obama campaigned hard in New Jersey but his “star power” failed



to save the day.

In Washington D.C., the debate around health care reform continues to be predicated on how many votes the Democrats can muster, and they managed to “squeak” by with two votes as the House passed the Health Care Reform act on Saturday, November 7,



Republicans and Democrats? Can they work together?

2009. The Republican minority in both chambers is complaining loudly that this initiative is not bi-partisan and that they have been excluded from the discussion.

With the announcement by Senator Joe Lieberman (who usually votes with the Democrats) that he would not support the Senate version of the health care bill, bi-partisanship becomes an issue once again.

Continuing Resolution Keeps Government Operating

On October 29, 2009, the US House of Representatives and US Senate passed a continuing resolution that will keep the government operating through December 18, 2009.

This resolution was necessary because the Senate still

has 5 of 12 of the FY 2010 spending bills that must be passed to provide spending authority to government agencies. Still pending is the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Act, which funds many of the

programs that impact children and families.

A continuing resolution (CR) simply extends the previous year’s spending authority. To view the resolution, go to <http://appropriations.house.gov>.

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Special points of interest:

- Virginia Has New Republican Governor
- Oklahoma Creates Chief of Education Strategy and Innovation
- Texas Designated “High Risk” To Spend Stimulus Funds
- Teacher Attitudes About Their Profession

Virginia Elects Republican Governor

Bob McDonnell, a Republican and former state attorney general, won a significant victory over his Democratic challenger, R. Creigh Deeds, on November 4, 2009. The Republican victory ended 8 years of Democratic control of the Virginia Governor's Office. With 99% of precincts reporting, McDonnell had 59% of the vote and Deeds had 41%. *Source: New York Times, 11/4/2009.*

McDonnell, a social and fiscal conservative, campaigned as a moderate Republican and focused his campaign on the economy, jobs, taxes and road improve-

ments. Although conservative in his views on abortion rights, gun control and increased taxes, McDonnell structured his campaign to appeal to moderates and independents. His campaign avoided divisive social issues and instead promoted his ideas on how to create jobs, improve the economy and fix the state's transportation problems.

McDonnell grew up in Fairfax County, Virginia and is the son of an Air Force officer.

He attended Notre Dame University on a ROTC scholarship and served 21 years in the US Army, both on active and reserve duty. He served 14 years in the Virginia House of Delegates



Bob McDonnell
Virginia's New Governor

from Virginia Beach and was chairman of the Courts of Justice Committee and Assistant Majority Leader.

He is the father of 5 children and has been married for 32 years to Maureen McDonnell.

Stimulus Spending: "High Risk" SECA States

The US General Accounting Office issued a report in September that provided a list of states that would receive intensive technical assistance to help them implement good practices using ARRA funds for education.

The US Department of Education used a risk-based approach to identify these states and **Texas** was identified as one of those states. The Department considered multiple factors, such as the

number of monitoring and audit findings in the state to produce the list.

Additionally, the Department has updated Title I and IDEA monitoring plans and **Arkansas, Florida, Louisi-**

ana, North Carolina and Oklahoma are on the list for intensive technical assistance for Title I. **Louisiana and Virginia** will see increased monitoring and technical assistance for IDEA.

Source: Recovery Act: Funds Continue to Provide Fiscal Relief to State and Localities While Accountability and Reporting Challenges Need to be Fully Addressed . US Government Accountability Office, September 2009.

A full copy of the report by the US Government Accountability Office can be found at www.gao.gov

US Secretary of Education Encourages Better Teacher Prep

During a speech at Teacher's College on October 22, 2009, US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan raised the issue of teacher preparation and the role of our Colleges of Education. Secretary Duncan suggested that teacher prep programs must dramatically change how they prepare teachers in the future.

According to Secretary Duncan, "Colleges of Education need to make

dramatic changes to prepare today's children to compete in the global economy. Teacher preparation programs should ensure that new teachers will master the content of the subjects they'll teach and they will have well-supported field experiences embedded through-



Education Secretary Arne Duncan at Bunker Hill Elementary in Bunker Hill, WV

out their preparation programs. Their ultimate goal should be to create a generation of teachers who are focused on improving student achievement and ready to deliver on that goal."

Source: www.ed.gov, Press Release. 10-22-09

Tennessee Pre-K: No Proven Lasting Effects Beyond 2nd Grade

On October 29, 2009, the Office of the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury issued a report, *Assessing the Effectiveness of Tennessee's Pre-Kindergarten Program: Annual Report 2008-2009*.

This report determined that kindergarten students who attended a state funded pre-K program did better academically than a comparable group of children who had no pre-K experience but also revealed that the researchers had determined very little evidence of those effects beyond the 2nd grade.

This report is one of a series that is being produced by the Strategic Re-

search Group (SRG) under contract to the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury's Office of Research and Education Accountability (OREA).

The reports have three objectives:

- 1) To determine whether children who attended a state-funded Pre-K program perform better in the short and long term than peers who did not attend Pre-K.



Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen: A Strong Proponent of Pre-K

- 2) To assess what aspects of the Pre-K program impact student achievement.

- 3) To evaluate the effectiveness of the program over time.

An upcoming report is expected to be released later this year that will include an evaluation of the results of a program and curriculum alignment with Kindergarten state standards.

Source:

www.comptroller1.state.tn.us

Recognition and Response: RTI for Pre-K

Researchers at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute recently completed a research study on Recognition and Response (R & R).

R & R is a new approach designed to teach pre-kindergartners and "it helps teachers use information they gather on children's skills to improve the quality of instruction to all children and to provide targeted interventions to some

children who need additional supports to learn."

The study found that the target group that received the language and literacy interventions made greater gains than

their classmates in letter naming, vocabulary, sound awareness and print knowledge. Pre-K teachers were able to implement this approach successfully with a high level of accuracy."

Given the growing interest in RTI for pre-K, the field needs policies, guidelines and resources to support broader implementation .

For more information contact Virginia Buysse at

randr@mail.fpg.unc.edu

Dr. Buysse was a keynoter at SECA 2009 in Myrtle Beach, SC.

Tulsa Mayor to Return to Oklahoma Governor's Administration

Governor Brad Henry of Oklahoma has named Tulsa Mayor, Kathy Taylor, as the state's new Chief of Education Strategy and Innovation. **This is a newly created position that will be responsible for pursuing federal grants that are earmarked for use to boost educational achievement.**

In 2003, she was appointed Oklahoma Secretary for Commerce and Tourism

by the Governor, heading three executive state agencies and acting as the Governor's small business advocate. She resigned from that position in 2006 to run for Mayor of her hometown, Tulsa, and unseated a one-term incumbent. Governor Henry stated that this new



Oklahoma's New Chief of Education Strategy and Innovation

role will prepare the state to access federal education grants that reward innovation in the classroom.

Ms. Taylor will assume her position this fall.

Sources: *Education Week*, October 7, 2009: www.citymayors.com

Southern Early Childhood Association

1123 S. University, Ste 255
Little Rock, AR 72204
PO Box 55930
Little Rock, AR 72215-5930

Phone: 800-305-SECA
Fax: 501-227-5297
E-mail:

info@southernearlychildhood.org

Southern Early Childhood Association



"A Voice for Southern Children"

We're on the Web!
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How to Use This Newsletter

If you're interested in advocacy, one of the most effective tools that you can have is access to information. This newsletter is provided as a service to locate and share information that we think will be helpful to you in your work at the state level and to keep you updated on what's happening in public policy.

You'll find information that:

- **Compares your state to other SECA states**—how you're doing, what issues you have in common, what the hot topics are in your states.
- **Brings the national scene to your fingertips** and gives you a perspective on how national events might impact you...You'll also receive information about where to find additional information.

We hope you'll find it helpful. Children need you to be their "voice" in your community and state.

Teaching for a Living

New research by Public Agenda and Learning Point Associates paints a fairly dismal picture of how many teachers feel about their chosen profession. This study, reported for the first time in the October 21, 2009, edition of *Education Week*, found three categories of K-12 teachers in the nationwide study.

DISHEARTENED teachers who represent 40% of the participants surveyed.

IDEALIST teachers who represent 23% of the participants surveyed.

CONTENTED teachers who represent 37% of the participants surveyed.

Disheartened teachers tend to feel

less supported by their building administration and are concerned about working conditions and student behavior.

Idealist and contented teachers believe that their teaching makes a difference with students. **Idealist** teachers believe that any child can learn—all they need is the right teacher and engaging learning. **Contented** teachers tend to be in middle to high income schools and have more experience in their profession.

Participants were also asked the question about whether any child could go to college with the right support.

- 54% of the Idealists were confi-

dent that this was correct.

- 30% of the **Contented** teachers were confident that this was correct.
- 39% of the **Disheartened** teachers were confident that this was correct.

These results posed some interesting policy questions.

Should only Idealists be placed in the hard to teach schools?

Are they the best group to foster change?

Could school leadership be changed to assist the disheartened teachers?

Source: *State of Mind, Education Week, October 21, 2009*