

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

Consortium to Develop Tests for Common Standards: What Does It Mean for Pre-k-3?

On Thursday, September 2, 2010, Arne Duncan, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, announced that a \$170 grant had been awarded to the [Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for Colleges and Careers](#). This grant is designed to support the development of common standardized tests to be implemented in the 2014-2015 school year.

These tests will be created to gauge student progress toward the common core curriculum standards adopted by 36 states and will replace the end-of-year paper test with computerized tests that will be given throughout the year to allow teachers to modify instruction for struggling students.

The Partnership was one of two groups representing 44 states that were awarded \$330 million in total funding.

States have previously drafted their own assessments to connect with state developed curriculum standards and, with the adoption of the common core standards, new assessments are needed.

The Partnership is a consortium of 25 states and Washington, D.C. Twelve of those states are “[governing states](#)” that will take a more active role in developing specific items to be tested under the common core standards. The SECA states of [Arkansas](#), [Louisiana](#),

[Tennessee](#) and [Florida](#) are considered governing states. SECA states that are “[participating states](#)” in the Partnership are [Oklahoma](#), [Mississippi](#), [Alabama](#), [Georgia](#), [South Carolina](#), and [Kentucky](#).

Aligning kindergarten through 12th grade curriculum with college expectations should prevent remediation, according to Tom Kimbrell, Director of the Arkansas Department of Education.

No word on what this means for pre-K. Kindergarten-3 will be included.

Source: *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, 9-3-2010

Greening America's Capitals

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has selected five state capitals to receive hands-on assistance from urban planners, landscape architects and other professionals. [Greening America's Capitals](#) is a project of the *Partnership for Sustainable Communities* between EPA, the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban De-

velopment and the U.S. Dept. of Transportation.

The project is “*designed to help state capitals develop an implementable vision of distinctive, environmentally friendly neighborhoods that incorporate innovative green building and green infrastructure strategies....EPA is providing this design assistance to help support*

sustainable communities that protect the environment, economy and public health.”

Two SECA states, [Arkansas](#) (Little Rock) and [West Virginia](#) (Charleston), had their state capitals selected to participate in this effort

Source: www.epa.gov

September 2010

Volume 3, Issue 9

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Congress Back in Session

The U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives have been out of Washington, D.C. on their August break.

The [Senate](#) is scheduled to return for business on [September 13, 2010](#).

The [House](#) is scheduled to return for business on [September 14, 2010](#).

Grandparents Raising More Children Since the Recession Began

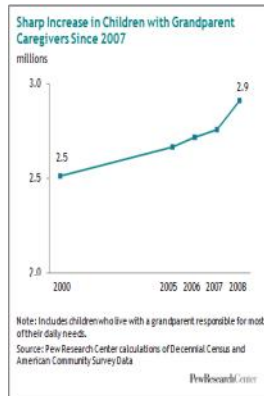
The Pew Research Center recently issued a summary of census data that highlighted the fact that one child in 10 in the United States now lives with a grandparent.

About four-in-ten (41%) of those children who live with a grandparent or grandparents are being raised primarily by that grandparent, according to census data.

“The phenomenon of grandparents serving as primary caregivers is more common among blacks and Hispanics but the sharpest rise since the recession

began has been among whites.”

Almost half (49%) of children being raised by grandparents also live with a



single parent. For about four-in-ten (43%) of these children, there is no parent in the household. About 8% have both parents in the household, in addition to the caregiver grand-

parent.

Profile of Grandparent Caregivers, 2008

- 62% women, 38% men
- 82% are between the ages of 45-69
- 53% white, 24% black, 18% Hispanic
- 66% married, 34% not married
- 65% fall below 3 times the poverty level in income.

Source: <http://pewresearch.org>

Polling and Cell Phones: It's Harder to Do

Polling has become an increasingly important part of American life, documenting trends in issues all the way from political campaigns to who uses what soap.

During the last few years, the staple of political polling—land line telephones—has been decreasing steadily as users move to cellular only phones. For political pollsters, this takes a significant demographic out of reach in terms of polling, and lifestyle or public-opinion

polling is increasingly dependent on cell users.

“While we do not currently incorporate cell phones when conducting our surveys, we are experimenting with ways to effectively do so in the future.”

**Debra Falk
Rasmussen Reports**

Some challenges for pollsters

- Cell phone users tend to be younger, poorer and more likely to be members of a minority group.
- Laws prevent automated calls going to cell phones.
- Pollsters have to pay more for cell phone numbers.

Source: *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, August 29, 2010

Senate Passes Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act

On August 10, 2010, the U.S. Senate passed the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act*. This bill makes the largest investment in child nutrition programs since they were created and “sets national standards that ensure healthier foods will be served in the cafeteria and throughout the school campus.”

Senator Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas is the Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee and the passage of this Act

has been one of her top priorities since becoming chairman. “Passage of this historic bill is a huge victory for Arkansas’s children and will provide long-term, cost-effective and common sense solutions to our nation’s greatest health challenges.... The *Healthy-Hunger Free Kids Act* will help in the efforts to combat childhood hun-



Senator Blanche Lincoln (AR)

ger and obesity, while making an investment in our children that will last a lifetime.”

The federal child nutrition programs are set to expire on September 30th, and the U.S House of Representatives now considers reau-

thorization legislation. Source: <http://lincoln.senate.gov/newsroom>

Cutting Crime by Cutting Child Poverty

On August 26, 2010, Arkansas Attorney General Dustin McDaniel and Pulaski County Sheriff Doc Holladay joined Jeff Kirsch, vice-president of the organization, *Fight Crime: Invest in Kids*, to release the report, *Cutting Crime by Cutting Child Poverty*.

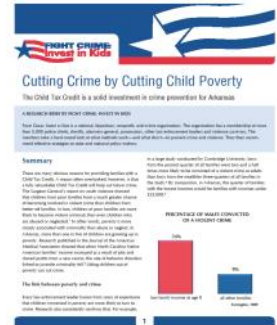
According to the report, “Every law enforcement leader knows from years of experience that children immersed in poverty are more likely to turn to crime.....For example, in a large study by Cambridge University, boys from the poorest quarter of all families were two and a half times more likely to be convicted of a violent crime as adults than

boys from the wealthier three-quarters of all families in the study.”

Fight Crime, Invest in Kids is campaigning to ensure that the Child Tax Credit remains intact. If nothing is done by December 31st, the credit will reduce from \$1000 to \$500, and the income eligibility requirement will rise to \$12,850. The organization is recommending that the full credit be maintained and that it is a wise family-friendly investment as well as a way to prevent future violent crime.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids is a national, bipartisan, nonprofit, anti-crime organization with a membership of more than

5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, attorneys general, prosecutors, other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors. The members take a hard-nosed look at what methods work—and what don’t—to prevent crime and violence. They then recommend effective strategies to state and national policymakers. Source: www.fightcrime.org



Many Oklahoma Water Systems Don't Meet Codes

According to an article published on September 5, 2010 in *The Oklahoman*, “nearly 140 public water supplies in the state are operating in violation of state and federal drinking water codes, pumping water containing chemicals linked to cancer, infant illness and damage to the liver and nervous system.”

The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality regulates 1,582 public water systems in the state, and there are

currently about 16,000 central Oklahoma customers with orders to resolve environmental compliance issues.

“The public has a right to know about the quality of their drinking water. Some of these things might not hurt them for several decades, but they have the right to know.”
Skylar McElheny, Oklahoma DEQ

Violations include high levels of disinfectant byproducts, high levels of nitrates and high levels of arsenic, uranium and selenium.

The consent orders require systems to resolve the violations and notify the public.

For more information about the system in your area, go to

<http://www.deq.state.ok.us/>

Six SECA States File Brief in Support of Arizona Law

In the on-going battle between the federal government and state of Arizona over a state immigration law that was recently enacted, eleven Attorneys General have filed a brief in support of Arizona.

The brief contends that the federal government has intervened in the case wrongly and that the Tenth Amendment to the US Constitution gives states the right to enforce immigration laws. Filed by the Attorney General of

Michigan, the states of **Alabama, Florida, Idaho, Louisiana, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas and Virginia** have joined that state in the filing. The brief asks that the preliminary injunction which halted implementation be lifted so that enforcement of the Arizona law can proceed.

“Our states are being harmed by the influx of illegal aliens. The federal government has

failed to protect us by securing our borders. Now that the states are attempting to protect ourselves, the federal government has challenged our right to do so. We stand with Arizona and reassert our right, pursuant to the Tenth Amendment, to once again, make the states laboratories for public policy experimentation.” Alabama Attorney General, Troy King
Sources: www.ago.state.al.us/ Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 9-5-2010

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Southern Early Childhood Association



"A Voice for Southern Children"

We're on the Web!

www.southernearlychildhood.org

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.

Principals Need Better Training on the Early Years

The National Association of Elementary School Principals has issued a series of legislative recommendations for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Included in those recommendations is a section entitled, *Strengthening Professional Development for Principals: Investing in Early Childhood Development to Improve School Readiness*.

These recommendations are based on several premises:

1. An abundance of research has proven that success in K-12 education starts before students enter the classroom.
2. Now more than ever, elementary

school principals are actively engaged in early childhood learning, leading programs in their schools and communities that are showing improvements in academic success.

3. Many principal preparation programs and school systems lack sufficient training and professional learning opportunities to help principals design and lead quality early childhood programs that are aligned with K-3.

Three significant recommendations:

- Strengthen professional development for principals by authorizing a new grant

program to support training on the early years.

- Develop standards for program strategies to create comprehensive early childhood programs.
- Ensure system alignment from pre-kindergarten to third grade.

For more information go to <http://d6test.naesp.org/FedJuly2010.aspx>



National Association of Elementary School Principals
Serving all elementary and middle-level principals