

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

Ready for School?

States Debate How to Test “Readiness”

There’s a national debate going on about how to appropriately assess “school readiness” of young children. As the education community moves into evidence-based practice and states require that educators “prove” that their programs are successful, the debate has intensified and grown across both the national and state scene.

With the advent of significant pre-K systems in the states and the national push to reinforce the data requirements with the U.S. Department of Education’s Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grants, states are grappling with how to implement appropriate and effective assessment systems.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) recently released a report, *Developing Kindergarten Readiness and Other Large-Scale Assessment Systems: Necessary Considerations in the Assessment of Young Children*, authored by Dr. Kyle Snow, director

of NAEYC’s Center for Applied Research.

Dr. Snow outlines these specific areas that should be considered as any system is designed:

- ◆ What is the purpose of the assessment?
- ◆ How psychometrically sound is the assessment?
- ◆ What is the content of the assessment?
- ◆ What is the cost of the assessment?
- ◆ Who assesses the child?
- ◆ When and how often are the assessments completed?
- ◆ What children are assessed?
- ◆ How are assessments in multiple languages managed?
- ◆ How timely is the use of the assessment?
- ◆ How is the data to be used?
- ◆ How will the data become part of the comprehensive data systems being developed?
- ◆ How will data

confidentiality and security be maintained?

As Dr. Snow states in the report:

“A one-time snapshot of a child entering a kindergarten classroom cannot capture all of the cumulative experiences in programs, in the home, and in the community of a young child from birth to that day in kindergarten.”

What’s Happening in Florida

The Voluntary Pre-K program in Florida enrolls roughly 84% of all 4-year-olds in that state and the state recently enacted a law that mandated that a child’s knowledge and skills in early literacy, math and language be measured. That data was to be utilized to measure the effectiveness of individual programs and pre-K funding was tied to that effectiveness measure. **SECA first reported this development in the March 2012 issue of Public Policy Notes.**

Advocates fear that the assessments fail to address the “whole child” and focus specifically on cognitive/academic development.

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Want to Know More About This Assessment Debate?

For the NAEYC report, go to <http://www.naeyc.org/resources/research/kreadinessassessment>

For an article on the debate, *Educators Decry Academic Focus of Florida Pre-K Test*, see the September 26, 2012 issue of *Education Week*.

Louisiana Finds Unique Funding Source for Pre-K



Commissioner
Rainwater

Louisiana is attempting a novel approach to financing pre-K. The Commissioner of Administration, Paul Rainwater, has requested approval from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to utilize \$20 million of funds slated for hurricane rebuilding efforts to support pre-K programs in the state.

In the fiscal year budget that began July 1st, these funds were included for the pre-K program. The proposal is being justified by proposing that supporting pre-K participation for families impacted by hurricanes Gustav and Ike is a way to support them through the rebuilding stage. The hurricane recovery money would pay for at-risk children in the hurricane-damaged parishes.

Representative Simone Champagne of Jeanerette thinks the funds should be utilized for their original purpose and that the Department

of Education should look elsewhere for funding. The \$20 million that is being shifted to the pre-K program was originally to be used to repair damage to public buildings and schools. Louisiana received more than \$1 billion in federal recovery block grant funds after the hurricanes. Source:

<http://finance.yahoo.com/news/la-seeks-recovery-money-pre-191435953.html>



Representative
Champagne



The Kentucky Supreme Court ruled in the case Jefferson County Board of Education v. Chris Fell on September 20, 2012 that “**Kentucky public school students have no statutory right to attend a particular school.**”

Kentucky: School Assignments Upheld

The suit was filed by parents who contended that the school district did not have the right to assign students to particular schools and wanted their children to attend neighborhood schools. The Jefferson County system has 84,000 students and works with an assignment plan that can mean that students don't attend the school nearest their homes or neighborhood.

Justice Lisabeth Hughes Abramson asserted that “**student assignment within a school district in Kentucky is a matter that the legislature has committed to the sound discretion of the local school board**” and reversed a lower court ruling that tossed out the student assignment plan in Jefferson County. Source: <http://opinions.kycourts.net/sc/2011-SC-000658-DGE.pdf>

Nashville SD Denies Charter & Pays the Price

On September 18, 2012, the Tennessee Department of Education announced that it would withhold approximately \$3.4 million of non-classroom, administrative funding from the Metro Nashville Public Schools as a penalty for their failure to follow the state's charter school law.

The metro system had twice turned down a bid by an Arizona charter

school company to develop a school on the city's west side. District officials had argued that the proposal did not provide enough assurances to ensure that a diverse population attended the school.

“*The Metro Nashville school board had two chances to follow the law, and twice it chose to not do so. This is the consequence.*” Speaker of the Tennessee House, Beth Harwell.

Lieutenant Governor Ron Ramsey also stated his support for the action.



Speaker Harwell

Source: <https://news.tn.gov/node/9588>

Library of Congress Unveils New Website



On Wednesday, September 19, 2012, the Library of Congress unveiled a new website, replacing the Thomas legislative search system that was created in 1995 when the Internet was just beginning. This is the first new search engine for Congress since Thomas was launched.

Congress.gov looks more like Google and will allow people with differing levels of expertise to search the site and keep abreast of developments and proposals in Congress. It will also allow the user to share information on legislation on e-

mail, Twitter or Facebook. By January, the Library plans to add the full Congressional Record to the site.

The **Library of Congress**, begun in 1800 inside the U. S. Capitol, now occupies three buildings on Capitol Hill. The Thomas Jefferson Building (1897) is the original separate building for the Library.

The mission of the Library is to support the Congress in fulfilling its constitutional duties and to further the progress of knowledge and creativity for the benefit of the Ameri-

can people. A repository of the history of the United States and much of the world, the collections housed at the Library contain:

- ◆ 34.5 million catalogued books and other print materials in 470 languages.
- ◆ More than 66.6 million manuscripts.
- ◆ The largest rare book collection in North America.
- ◆ The world's largest collection of legal materials, films, maps, sheet music and sound recordings.



Michael Williams

Texas and **Florida** have once again made changes in the helm of their state education agencies.

Michael Williams is the new chief of the Texas Education Agency.

Two New Education Chiefs

Williams is the former chairman of the Railroad Commission of Texas and was the Assistant Secretary of Education for Civil Rights at the U. S. Department of Education. The son of two educators, he is the first African-American commissioner of education in the state's history.

Pam Stewart is the new Commissioner of Education for the state of Florida. She has been a teacher,

guidance counselor, principal, and deputy superintendent, working in three different Florida public schools. She was appointed by the State Board of Education to serve as Commissioner of Education on an interim basis beginning September 1, 2012.



Pam Stewart

Counting Kids and Tracking Funds

The New American Foundation released a report, **Counting Kids and Tracking Funds in Pre-K and Kindergarten**, in September 2012 that identifies gaps and deficiencies in the way that communities and schools track how many children are served by publicly funded pre-school and kindergarten programs. According to the issue brief, "*Even as the availability of data on K-12 edu-*

cation programs has exploded over the past decade, the American education system suffers from an acute lack of some of the most basic information about publicly funded programs for young children."

The issue brief provides insights on several problems in pre-K funding, including the fact that multiple funding sources and the emphasis on "blending and braiding" these

funds increases the difficulty of collecting data on programs. Programs also don't compare easily: eligibility requirements, program hours and the ages of children served can vary widely.

For a copy of the issue brief, go to http://newamerica.net/publications/policy/counting_kids_and_tracking_funds_in_pre_k_and_kindergarten

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"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.

Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998

With the advent of the Internet, privacy concerns, particularly for children younger than 13, surfaced and Congress enacted the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) in 1998.

The Federal Trade Commission has issued proposed updates to the plan that have caused a furor with some of the major online social networking sites. Google, Facebook, Digg, Twitter and Reddit have filed protests against the updates claiming that these new rules would "**undermine free speech**".

COPPA was adopted before the advent of smart phones, those phones and apps began tracking locations, and social media "plug

ins" were embedded in millions of communications. The "plug ins" were designed to allow quick access for users but each time that a user clicks on a plugin, those social networks note the action and use it for advertising.

The current law requires that:

- ⇒ Companies must seek permission from parents to collect data from users age 13 and under.
- ⇒ The sites must clearly identify that they are child-oriented and that they are collecting personal information such as e-mail addresses, names, phone numbers and demographic data and allow parents to re-

view/delete that information.

The proposed rules would:

- ◇ Extend the law to mobile devices, such as iPhones.
- ◇ Require websites that include plugins to receive verifiable parental permission to collect information on children.
- ◇ Add behavioral advertising tracking cookies and geo-location information to the list that requires verifiable parental permission.

For a copy of the Children's Online Privacy and Protection Act, go to <http://www.ftc.gov/ogc/coppa1.htm>.