

# Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

## The Election's Over— Up Next: The Fiscal Cliff

The uncertainty of the past few months is now over—with President Obama's election to a second term, we now know the philosophical direction in which the administration will go.

That said, the challenges facing the President are enormous and solutions will require bi-partisan cooperation.

The President met with the Congressional leadership (Boehner, Pelosi, Reid & Mitchell) last week to begin discussions about averting the "fiscal cliff". News reports and press conferences after the meeting presented a genial and productive picture of these initial meetings. Both the Presi-

dent and Speaker Boehner have agreed that compromise on the thorniest issues (tax cuts, revenue increases, entitlement reform) are possible but there is a long way to go before those compromises are reached.

To re-cap what the fiscal cliff means:

- ◆ \$600 billion worth of tax increases and spending cuts are set to begin on January 1, 2013.
- ◆ The spending cuts are "across the board": they do not reflect any prioritization of spending reductions.
- ◆ The combination of tax increases and

spending reductions have the potential to push the fragile economy into a recession. The economy has undergone a very weak recovery from the 2009-2010 fiscal crisis.

In a speech last week, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke predicted that 2013 could be a "[very good year for the U.S. economy if Congress can strike a quick deal to avoid the so-called fiscal cliff.](#)" *Source:* <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/20/us-usa-fed-bernanke-idUSBRE8AE1JB20121120>

Let's hope that Chairman Bernanke's prediction comes true.

## South Carolina Loses Special Education Funds

On October 1, 2012, the U.S. Department of Education withheld about \$33 million in special education funds from South Carolina. (The Department took a similar action in Kansas.)

The action was taken in response to a reduction in special education funding by the state over the school

years 2008-09, 2009-10 & 2010-11. According to federal statute, the Department is allowed to withhold funding if the state reduces its spending on special education without the appropriate justification. Although South Carolina justified the cuts by declines in state revenue,

the Department contended that the state cut more funding than necessary.

The U.S. Secretary of Education denied South Carolina's request to appeal the decision. SC State Superintendent of Education, Dr. Mick Zais has filed for review in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit.

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**Like to Know More About the Fiscal Cliff and Sequestration?**

Check out these articles in past issues of *Public Policy Notes*.

**May 2012:** [Budget Committee Adopts Cuts in Spending](#)

**July 2012:** [It's All About the Money](#)

## North Carolina Governor Increases Pre-K Funding

In an on-going debate about the future and funding of North Carolina's pre-K program, Governor Beverly Perdue used her powers of Executive Order on October 18, 2012 to increase the funding available to the North Carolina Pre-K program. The increased funding will allow the program to serve up to 6,300 additional children by January 1, 2013.

The funding of North Carolina pre-K



Governor Perdue

has been a battle between the state legislature and the Governor, with the legislature reducing funding during budget battles. The issue finally landed in the North Carolina Court of Appeals and the "right of "at risk" children to be admitted to pre-K" was upheld.

Governor Perdue funded this expansion with \$20 million in projected unspent funds from the De-

partment of Health and Human Services. The funding will be distributed to counties prior to the end of 2012 to fund expanded enrollment through the remainder of the 2012-2013 academic year.

"Through good economic times and bad, North Carolina's enduring commitment has been to educate our children. Now more than ever, as we sit poised for an economic recovery, any delay in preparing our kids to be tomorrow's workforce is simply unacceptable." Governor Perdue

Source: <http://www.governor.state.nc.us>

## Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors

Families in Schools sponsors **Abriendo Puertas**, a program designed to strengthen the advocacy skills of parents of children ages 0 to 5. It's a school readiness program with a curriculum based on "popular education that draws on the real life experiences of participants."

Latino parents of young children meet each week in a group setting to "develop their ability to be their child's

first teacher." The topics include:

- ⇒ How to be your child's first teacher & promote early literacy.
- ⇒ Goal setting, communication & advocacy.
- ⇒ Child development & socio-emotional wellness.
- ⇒ Choosing child care & preschool.
- ⇒ Enhancing parenting skills.

A National Evaluation Report for **Abriendo Puertas** that was completed

by the University of California, Berkley is available at [http://www.familiesinschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/AP\\_OD-Brief-100212-FINAL-pages.pdf](http://www.familiesinschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/AP_OD-Brief-100212-FINAL-pages.pdf)



## Miami Dade School District Wins Broad Prize for Education



*Accepting the Award for the Miami Dade School District*

The Miami Dade School District was

selected as the recipient of the 2012 Broad Prize for Urban Education. The District was a five-time finalist for the award, finally taking the prize and \$550,000 in scholarship money home this year.

The Broad Prize is an annual award that honors the four large urban school districts that demonstrate the strongest student achievement and improvement in student achievement while reducing

achievement gaps among low-income and minority students. The 75 largest urban school districts in America are automatically eligible for the award each year. Three of the four finalists this year were from the SECA region. Also recognized were the Houston ISD (TX) and the School District of Palm Beach County (FL).

For more information about the prize, go to <http://www.broadprize.org>.

# NGA Issues White Paper on Aligning ECE & K-12

The National Governors Association released a White Paper on October 1, 2012 entitled, *Governor's Role in Aligning Early Education and K-12 Reforms: Challenges, Opportunities, and Benefits for Children*. The White Paper provides guidance to the states' governors on six key issues in the reform debate and the related challenges and opportunities within those key issues.

The issues outlined in the report are:

- ◆ **Leadership and Governance:** Re-design or create new governance structures to align ECE and early

elementary policies and practices.

- ◆ **Learning Standards:** Ensure early learning standards and early elementary standards are aligned.
- ◆ **Child Assessments:** Develop assessments that help monitor children's progress toward the academic & development goals that are reflected in states' early learning standards and the CCSS.
- ◆ **Accountability:** Incorporate promising practices from early learning into accountability policies that apply to the early elementary

grades.

- ◆ **Teacher/Leader Preparation and Professional Development:** Ensure ECE and K-12 educators and leaders have the capacity to prepare children for CCJSS and area aligned in their approaches.
- ◆ **Resource Allocation and Reallocation:** Ensure resources support access to high-quality ECE programs.

For a copy of the paper, go to <http://www.nga.org>

## Election 2012 Results: Some Things to Note

### Florida

Voters defeated Amendment 8 to the Florida constitution that would have permitted publicly-funded vouchers to be used at religious schools. The Amendment was supported by religious groups and former Governor Jeb Bush.

### Georgia

A new commission was created that will approve charter schools. The measure was opposed by State Superintendent

John Barge who felt that it would hurt funding for traditional public schools.



### North Carolina

State Superintendent June Atkinson (D) won a third term. She will now work with a Republican controlled legislature and Governor.

### West Virginia

Governor Earl Ray Tomblin (D) was elected, defeating his Republican challenger, Bill Maloney. When former Governor Manchin moved to the U.S. Senate, Tomblin assumed the office of Governor through the state constitutional succession process.



## North Carolina Elects New Governor

The Governor's Office of North Carolina changed hands and parties with the November election. Pat McCrory, the Republican candidate, was elected to replace Governor Beverly Perdue, a Democrat, who did not seek re-election.

Governor-Elect McCrory served as mayor of Charlotte, NC and as the chair of the Republican Mayors Association.

He campaigned on 7 principles:

- 1) Fix Our Broken Economy with New Vision and Leadership
- 2) Make Government More Responsive to Business
- 3) Modernize the Tax Code to Spur Job Creation, Productivity and Innovation.
- 4) Unleash NC's Energy Resources to Help Power Our Economy
- 5) Create a Long-term Vision for Transportation & Infrastructure to Support Economic Growth
- 6) Reform Education to Create a Workforce for the Future
- 7) Expand Opportunities for Key Industries to Strengthen NC's Economy

Source: <http://www.patmccrory.com>



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Southern Early Childhood Association



"A Voice for Southern  
Children"

We're on the Web!  
[www.southernearlychildhood.org](http://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.

## The Fiscal Cliff and the States: It's Not All Bad News

As mentioned in the lead article of this newsletter, the Fiscal Cliff looms at the end of 2012 and Congress has decisions to make that can have a substantial impact on the economy. That said, depending upon the route taken to deal with the Fiscal Cliff, states might see an enhancement of revenues, according to a report released by Pew Center on the States. [The Impact of the Fiscal Cliff on the States](#) presents these key findings.

- ◆ "For at least 25 states and the District of Columbia, lower federal deductions would mean more income being taxed at the state level, resulting in higher state tax revenues.

- ◆ At least 30 states and the District of Columbia would see revenue increases because they have tax credits based on federal credits that would be reduced.
- ◆ At least 23 states have adopted federal rules for certain deductions related to business expenses. The scheduled expiration of these provisions would mean higher taxable corporate income and higher state tax revenues.
- ◆ Thirty-three states would collect more revenue as a result of scheduled changes in the estate tax.

Now the bad news: "Roughly 18 percent of federal grant dollars to the

states would be subject to the across-the-board cuts, including funding for education, nutrition for low-income women & children, public housing and other programs."

Because the amount of the grant awards vary by state, there would be a different effect on each state. For instance, of the SECA states, Georgia would stand to lose the most (8.5% of GDP) in cuts to federal grants that are subject to the sequester. Virginia would fare the best with 5.6% of GDP if the cuts take effect. For a copy of the report and individual statistics on your state go to [http://www.pewstates.org/uploadedFiles/PCS\\_Assets/2012/Pew\\_fiscal\\_cliff\\_report.pdf](http://www.pewstates.org/uploadedFiles/PCS_Assets/2012/Pew_fiscal_cliff_report.pdf)