

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

Phase Two of Race to the Top: Some SECA States are Winners

The U.S. Department of Education announced the winners of the second phase of the Race to the Top competition on August 24, 2010. The Department had previously announced the 18 finalists for this phase and **six SECA states were among the finalists:**

- Florida
- Georgia
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- North Carolina
- South Carolina

Three of the six SECA states were awarded grants: **Florida, Georgia and North Carolina.**

Three of the six states were

losers in the competition: **Kentucky, Louisiana and South Carolina.**

Tennessee was one of two winners in Phase One.

All states that were designated finalists in the Phase Two Competition developed presentations that were made to review panels in Washington, D.C. This presentation, combined with the state's written applications were scored and ranked to determine who would receive funding.

SECA winners will receive the following amounts:

Florida \$700,000,000

Georgia \$400,000,000

N Carolina \$400,000,000

"We had many more competitive applications than money to fund them in this round," according to Arne Duncan, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. "We're very hopeful there will be a Phase 3 of Race to the Top and have requested \$1.35 billion dollars in next year's budget. In the meantime, we will partner with each and every state that applied to help them find ways to carry out the bold reforms they've proposed in their applications." Source: *News Release, August 24, 2010, www.ed.gov/news*

For more information about Race to the Top, go to *Public Policy Notes, April 2010, Volume 3: 4.*

Stakeholder Buy-ins Varied Widely

Applications for Race to the Top were reviewed for innovation and the state's ability to produce significant reforms. Specifically, the applications included:

1. How many of the state's districts had signed on to the proposed plan.
2. How many of the

state's unions had signed on to the plan.

3. Whether the states had capped the number of charter schools that could be established.

In **Florida**, 96% of the state's districts had signed on and 80% of the unions had bought in. Florida has no caps on charter schools.

In **Georgia**, 14% of the districts had signed on, the union buy-in was not applicable and there are no caps on charter schools.

In **North Carolina**, 100% of the districts had signed on and 100% of the unions had bought in. The state does have caps on charter schools.

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New Reports Available

Parents and the High Cost of Child Care: 2010 Update

www.naccrra.org

What Works for the Prevention and Treatment of Obesity Among Children

www.childtrends.org

A Review of School Readiness Practices in the States: Early Learning Guidelines and Assessments

www.childtrends.org

Counterpoint: Are Competitive Grants a Civil Rights Issue?

The national [Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law](#) recently issued a *Framework for Providing All Students an Opportunity to Learn through Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. This *Framework* recommended six major principles that the group will advocate to strengthen the ESEA and ensure that the federal government provides the support necessary to protect every child's civil right to a high-quality education:

1. Equitable opportunities for all;
2. Utilization of systematically proven

and effective educational methods;

3. Public and community engagement in education reforms;
4. Safe and educationally sound learning environments;
5. Diverse learning environments; and
6. Comprehensive and substantive accountability systems to maintain equitable opportunities and high outcomes.

Recommendations of particular note:

- “The adoption of *Common Resource*

Opportunity Standards by the federal government,” including benchmarks for high-quality early childhood education.”

- “A change in the approach to distributing funds through a competitive grant program (such as Race to the Top) to **conditional incentive grants** that can be made available to **all states**, provided they adopt systemic, proven strategies for providing all students with an opportunity to learn.”

Source: www.lawyerscommittee.org

Georgia Wins With Only 14% of School Districts Buying-In

In its Phase Two application for **Race to the Top Funds**, Georgia stated that 14% of its school districts had bought in to the plan and agreed to participate. On first review, this seems to be insufficient to place the application in competition, much less as a winner for Phase Two.

One of the major review criteria was that local school districts and the states were “partners” in the effort and that local districts had agreed to participate.

According to the review comments for the Georgia application, “Georgia has adopted a strategy of inviting LEAs (Local Education Agencies or school districts) to

“This concentration strategy is debatable as a means of reaching statewide reform but as a means of husbanding resources and allocating them where they are likely to produce the most impact it is a defensible strategy and one that falls into the middle of the high range.”

Source: *Georgia Technical Review Form*

join in the reform effort while setting out a comprehensive program of work covering all the 4 Race to the Top areas of action. All the LEA's that have signed on have agreed to the whole package- except where there are no eligible turn around schools in the district. The participating LEA's cover 40% of schools and students and 46% of students in poverty. The LEA's include some big districts like Atlanta, Clayton, DeKalb and Gwinnet. “

Source: www.mikogroup.com/RaceToTheTop

Mississippi Needs Pre-K

During a speech in July at the Whole Schools Summer Institute in Mississippi, former Governor William Winters focused many of his remarks on pre-K education and the failure of Mississippi to create a program as other Southern states have done.

He emphasized that, although Mississippi has never “thrown much money at the education problem,” money is not the only component of success.

“The parents have to get more involved,” he said. “The citizens in the communities have to get more involved.”

“We're the only state in the nation that really does not have any pre-K: a few local schools do.”

“We're never going to solve our problems unless we get a state supported, statewide program of Pre-K. That's how we solve the



William Winters

dropout rate, by getting kids prepared to go to schools and then let them be competitive once they get there,” according to Winters.

One Mississippi school district (Lauderdale County) has eliminated all pre-K programs for 2010-2011 due to budget cuts. Source: www.wtok.com

Most SECA States Have Adopted the Common Core Standards

As of August 6, 2010, thirty-four (34) states nationwide have adopted the Common Core Standards.

For more information about the Standards, see the SECA Policy Brief, *Common Core Standards*, at www.southernearlychildhood.org.

For many states, the impetus behind adoption of the standards was to gain leverage in the competition for the Race to the Top grants. Additional points were granted in the review process if states had adopted the standards by August 2, 2010.

Adoption of the standards has fueled

debate in many states about the quality of current state standards, whether the national standards meet or exceed those standards and whether assessment systems in place would need major revisions if the state adopts the Common Standards.

Early childhood advocates have also expressed concerns about the appropriateness of the standards (see the *Common Core Standards Policy Brief*, page 13, Appendix B) and urged the withdrawal of the K-3 standards.

Virginia, Alabama and Texas have not acted. Following are SECA state adoption dates.

2-10-2010 Kentucky

5-12-2010 West Virginia

6-3-2010 North Carolina

6-24-2010 Oklahoma

6-25-2010 Mississippi

7-1-2010 Louisiana

7-8-2010 Georgia

7-12-2010 Arkansas

7-14-2010 South Carolina

7-27-2010 Florida

7-30-2010 Tennessee

Source: *Education Week*, 8-11-10, pg 8

NAEYC Revising Position Statement

The National Association for the Education of Young Children, in conjunction with the Fred Rogers Center for early Learning and Children's Media, is beginning a revision of the 1996 position statement, *Technology and Young Children, Ages 3 to 8*.

According to a release by Jerlean Daniel, Executive Director of NAEYC, "the world of technology has changed and the technology available for explora-

tion, teaching and learning for young children is a significant part of that change. The revision of the 1996 position statement will provide guidance to professionals and parents on the "what,

why, when and how" of the digital media of this century.

NAEYC is inviting comments and input into the revision process and you may submit a document with thoughts and suggested changes to Madhavi Parikh at NAEYC.

For information on how to submit comments, e-mail Madhavi at mparikh@naeyc.org.

**Comments are due by
September 15, 2010.**

West Virginia Revises Early Learning Guidelines

On July 13, the West Virginia Department of Education introduced a revision of its Early Learning Standards Framework to the State Board of Education. This revision was designed to align the Early Learning Framework with the Common Core Standards that were developed nationally. The Common Core Standards were adopted by West Virginia on May 12, 2010.

The Early Learning Standards were reorganized and revised as follows:

1) Social and Emotional 2) Language and Literacy 3) Mathematics 4) Science 5) The Arts 6) Physical Health and Development.

"Guiding principles were revised to address best practices for each of the guiding principles, as well as the addition of school readiness and assessment guiding principles. Each of the additions support the WVDE's comprehensive definition of school readiness and

support the alignment of assessment approaches and requirements of Head Start, Office of Special Programs..."

http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/p2520.15_co.pdf

For more information, see SECA's Policy Brief, *Common Core Standards*, March 2010, at www.southernearlychildhood.org

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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.

We're Still Not Prepared for Disaster

Five years after Hurricane Katrina and we're still not prepared. **Save the Children** has produced a national report card on protecting children during natural disasters and they've found that most states are not prepared to fully protect children during disasters.

Some findings:

- Less than a quarter of all states and the District of Columbia meet all four basic preparedness standards.



- Less than half require all licensed child care facilities to have an evacuation and relocation plan.
- Less than half require all licensed child care facilities to have a family reunification plan.
- Less than two-thirds do not require all licensed child care facilities to have a plan that accounts for kids with special needs.
- Almost a dozen do not require K-12 schools to have a disaster plan that accounts for multiple types of disasters.

States were rated on the basis of 4 standards: 1) Evacuation and relocation plan requirements, 2) Family reunification plan requirements, 3) Planning for children with special needs, and 4) K-12 plans that account for multiple types of disasters.

How the SECA states fared

Red: 4 standards **Green:** 3 standards
Purple: 2 standards
Blue: 1 standard

Alabama (4)/ **Arkansas** (4)/**Florida** (2)/ **Georgia** (1)/ **Kentucky** (1)/ **Louisiana** (1)/ **Mississippi** (4)/ **North Carolina** (3)/ **Oklahoma** (3)/ **South Carolina** (3)/**Tennessee** (3)/ **Texas** (3)/ **Virginia** (2)/**West Virginia** (3). For a copy of the report go to www.savethechildren.org.