

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association
www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org

State Advisory Councils on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECAC)

With the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), a real opportunity for the early childhood field exists to promote the development of high-quality early childhood “systems” in the states. ARRA provides a **one-time start up grant to each state to develop better coordinated state systems of early childhood care and education.**

On May 11, 2009, a letter went to the Governor of each state that included that state’s grant allocation as well as other information about grant submission requirements. States will submit:

- A strategic plan that outlines the activities of the Early Childhood

Advisory Council.

- A fiscal document that outlines how the grant will be spent to improve school readiness.
- A description of the state’s early learning standards and goals to improve school readiness.
- Identification of the lead agency or body designated as the ECAC and the individual designated by the Governor to lead the effort.
- A description of how the state will maintain the effort after the end of the grant period.

The grant requires a state match of 70% of the grant amount. Application deadline is August 30, 2010.

SECA State Allocations

Alabama	\$1,707,985
Arkansas	\$1,174,518
Florida	\$4,818,802
Georgia	\$3,476,312
Kentucky	\$1,565,631
Louisiana	\$2,000,023
Mississippi	\$1,512,067
Oklahoma	\$1,506,605
S Carolina	\$1,628,299
Tennessee	\$2,254,123
Texas	\$11,274,474
Virginia	\$1,645,761
W Virginia	\$642,761

A policy brief on the ECAC is posted on the public policy page of the SECA website.

Sources: National Women’s Law Center & New America Foundation

Two Southerners to Join NAEP Board & Staff

The National Assessment Governing Board is an independent 26-member group that was created by Congress and is tasked with:

- Setting policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

- Identifying subjects to be tested.
- Determining test content and achievement levels and approving test questions.

Governor Sonny Perdue of Georgia was appointed by Secretary of Education Arne

Duncan to fill one of the 26 seats on the Governing Board.

Cornelia Smith Orr, a top official in the Florida Department of Education, will assume the position of Executive Director.

Source: Education Week, June 10, 2009

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Your State Legislative Session: How Did Children Fare?

As a resource for our state affiliates and members, SECA has compiled a policy summary of legislative actions in each state that will impact children. For most states, it was a challenging legislative session that required many difficult decisions. **Find our summary on the Public Policy page of the SECA website.**

Tracking Recession and Recovery in the South: The Brookings Institute

The Brookings Institute released a report on June 17, 2009 entitled, *Metro-Monitor: Tracking Economic Recession and Recovery in America's 100 Largest Metropolitan Areas*.

The report analyzed statistics such as markets for jobs and housing prices and concluded that the pain of the recession has been very unevenly distributed in the United States. **The South fared very well in the review and, of the top 10 strongest performing metropolitan areas of the United States, 9 of the 10 cities were in the SECA region. Florida was the only SECA state to have communities in the bottom 10 list.**

A few metropolitan areas are showing signs of economic recovery, although none has completely recovered. **McAllen, TX** is the only area that saw growth in both employment and output. **Baton Rouge, LA** saw growth in employment. Output increased in **Austin, TX, Virginia Beach, VA and Richmond, VA.**

The report concluded that there are two distinct Sun Belts. **Florida** has suffered severe employment, output, and home value declines. **Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana**

are experiencing less severe job losses, relatively large wage gains and modest home

price increases. Thirty-eight of the top 100 metro areas avoided declines in home prices over the past year as home prices declined 6% nationally.

SECA cities that ranked in the top ten (by ranking): 1) *San Antonio, TX*, 2) *Oklahoma City, OK*, 3) *Austin, TX*, 4)

Houston, TX, 5) *Dallas, TX*, 6) *McAllen, TX*, 7) *Little Rock, AR*, 8) *Baton Rouge, LA*, and 9) *Tulsa, OK*.

The Florida cities of *Bradenton, Tampa, Lakeland, and Jacksonville* were in the bottom 10 of the 100 cities.

Source: www.brookings.edu/reports/2009



San Antonio, Texas
#1 Performing
Metropolitan Area

Child Trends Produces Early Childhood Research Briefs

In May 2009, *Child Trends* released the following research briefs that will be of interest to early childhood professionals.

Two reports, *Early Care and Education Quality and Child Outcomes* and *Evaluating, Developing, and Enhancing Domain-Specific Measures of Child Care Quality*, focus on the link between program quality and child outcomes in early childhood settings. These two research briefs may be par-

ticularly useful in the discussion about “evidence-based” practices and the development of “high-quality” early childhood state systems.

What We Know and Don't Know About Measuring Quality in Early Childhood and School-age Care and

Founded in 1979, Child Trends helps keep the nation focused on children and their needs by identifying emerging issues.

Education Settings and Multiple Purposes for Measuring Quality in Early Childhood Settings: Implications for Collecting and Communicating Information on Quality can be helpful in discussions around QRIS and accountability systems.

Child Trends provides data-driven, evidence-based guidance on policy and practice and studies children at all stages of development. **For copies of the reports, go to www.childtrends.org.**

Fatherhood Programs: What Works

If you're interested in Fatherhood Programs, the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC) provides a wealth of information about current initiatives and their success in promoting Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage.

The Clearinghouse supports the Administration for Families' Office of Family Assistance in these efforts and provides resources for grantees and

programs. Designed primarily as a resource for professionals that are operating Fatherhood programs, the NRFC provides access to electronic publications, timely information on fatherhood issues and other resources. They also have a section of resources targeted to “**What Policymakers Should Know**”.

You'll find a copy of the practice research brief, *What Works in Fatherhood*

Programs: Ten Lessons from Evidence-Based Practice, on the NRFC website at www.fatherhood.gov. You'll also find a “clickable” map to locate programs in



your state. One of the 10 model programs cited in the practice research brief is located in **Fairfax, VA.**

Source: www.fatherhood.gov

Governor Perry Vetoes HB 130

As reported in the June 2009 edition of *Public Policy Notes*, Texas advocates won a significant victory in the passage of HB 130. This bill expanded access to high quality pre-K in the state of Texas and included a \$25 million additional appropriation for the program.

Unfortunately, Governor Perry chose to veto HB 130 on Friday, June 19, 2009, stating "... a similar grant program already exists. Consequently, Governor Perry encourages the Texas Education Agency to ensure the \$25 million appropriated for HB 130 be used to expand the number of students served by the existing pre-kindergarten

grant program which could reach 21,000 more students (a 305% increase) over the next biennium than would have been served under HB 130." *Source: Press Release, June 19, 2009, <http://governor.state.tx.us/news>.*

Karen Johnson, President and CEO, of United Way of Texas, a major proponent of the bill, issued an e-mail statement on June 23, 2009 that encouraged children's advocates to celebrate some victories.

Although the Governor vetoed the quality components of the bill, he couldn't veto the appropriation with-

out eliminating the existing pre-K program, so an additional \$25 million will be available to pre-K over the next biennium. Secondly, she noted that the United Way staff and advocates had become a powerful voice in Texas politics through this process. Third, she noted that the experience proved that the early childhood community can and will come together to promote an agenda for children.

Source: United Way of Texas



Governor Perry

Child Care & State Regulation

In 2007, the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies issued the report, *We Can Do Better: NACCRRA's Ranking of State Child Care Standards and Oversight*. This report concluded that most states fell short of providing the protections through child care regulation that children deserve.

In a recently released update to that report, NACCRRA found that progress has been made, but there's still a long way to go. The update includes current state rankings (as compared to the nation) for child care center over-

sight and regulations.

Of the **top 10 states** in the country for child care center oversight, the SECA states of **Oklahoma** (#1), **North Carolina** (#4), **South Carolina** (#5), **Arkansas** (#7), **Tennessee** (#7), **Texas** (#36) and **Florida** (#3) were included. There were no SECA states listed in the bottom 10 in this category.

"NACCRRA supports state flexibility, but there needs to be a floor to ensure that children are protected."

In the category of child care center regulations, no SECA state made the top 10; however, the states of **Alabama** (#45), **South Carolina** (#47), **Arkansas** (#49), **Georgia** (#49) and **Louisiana** (#51) made the **bottom 10**.

The report concluded, "The benchmarks selected by NACCRRA represent the most basic, minimal criteria possible. Yet the average score is 83 out of 150, which is 53% of all points available—a failing grade by anyone's standards."

Source: www.naccrra.org

Common Academic Standards in Math and Science

Under the sponsorship and direction of the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Center for Best Practices of the National Governor's Association, 49 states and territories have signed on to an effort to develop common standards among all states for math and science education. **Four states, including two SECA states, have not signed on to the effort.** Those states are Alaska, Missouri, **South Carolina** and **Texas**.

The focus of the initiative is to develop common academic standards that are adopted in all states, eliminating the variances that currently exist in those standards. The effort is also focused on developing more rigorous standards, and the standards will be internationally benchmarked.

In **South Carolina**, Governor Sanford has deferred the issue to State Education Superintendent Jim Rex who has voiced his support for the effort; how-

ever, Governor Sanford has not signed the agreement. In **Texas**, the justification for remaining out of the process is an economic one. State representatives are concerned about the cost of adopting the standards, particularly since they have just completed a standards revision and textbook adoption.

Grade-by-grade standards are slated to be in draft form by December 2009.

Sources: www.nga.org & www.ccsso.org

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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.

Data Quality Campaign: How Does Your State Collect Educational Data?

The Data Quality Campaign is a "national, collaborative effort to encourage and support state policy-makers to improve the availability and use of high-quality education data to improve student achievement." Launched in 2005, ten organizations founded the Campaign to assist states in developing comprehensive, quality data systems to inform and improve their educational systems. The Campaign identified 10 essential elements of a state longitudinal data system:

1. The creation of a *statewide student identifier* that could track students across years and school systems.
2. *Student-level enrollment*, demographic and program participation.
3. The *ability to match individual*

students' test records from year to year to measure academic growth.

4. Information on *untested students* and the reasons they weren't tested.
5. A *teacher identifier system* with the ability to match students to teachers.
6. *Student-level transcript information*, including information on courses completed and grades earned.
7. *Student-level college readiness scores*.
8. *Student-level graduation and drop-out data*.
9. *The ability to match student-level P-12 and Higher Education Data*.
10. A state data audit system assessing *data quality, validity and reliability*.

The Data Quality Campaign has pub-

lished a policy brief entitled ***Leveraging Federal Funding for Longitudinal Data Systems*** that identifies sources under the ARRA that can be utilized to support systems development. Included in this document is a discussion of how to develop and integrate systems for collection of pre-K data.

Why would this be relevant to early childhood educators? The funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act places an emphasis on accountability, and it will be necessary to develop quality data systems (and appropriate assessments to feed into that system) to document how the funds are being successfully spent. We also need to know if gains made in pre-K are maintained through the years. Go to www.DataQualityCampaign.org for more information.