

# Public Policy Notes

## Southern Early Childhood Association

### Common Core Standards Launched

On June 2, 2010, the National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers released the Common Core State Standards at Peachtree Ridge High School in Suwanee, Georgia.

The English-language arts and mathematics standards for grades K-12 establish "clear and consistent goals for learning that will prepare America's children for success in college and work."

Governor Sonny Perdue of **Georgia**, Florida Commissioner of Education Dr. Eric J. Smith and **West Virginia** State Superintendent of Schools Steve Paine have all expressed their

support for the standards. "The Common Core Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents have a roadmap for what they need to do to help them. Further, these standards provide appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they live, and allow states to more effectively help all students to succeed." Steve Paine, West Virginia State Superintendent of Schools. *Source: Press Release, June 2, 2010, [www.ccsso.org](http://www.ccsso.org)*

The **Alliance for Childhood** does not support the proposed standards. The Alliance "calls for the withdrawal of the proposed K-3 standards and for the creation

of a new consortium of scientists, master teachers and school leaders to develop appropriate guidelines for early care and education based on solid research and knowledge of children from birth through age eight." **Signatories to the Alliance statement include two former SECA Presidents:** Dr. Margaret Puckett of Texas and Suzanne Gellens of Florida. *Source: [www.allianceforchildhood.org](http://www.allianceforchildhood.org)*

The release of the standards signals the beginning of the process for voluntary adoption by states. **Kentucky** formally adopted the standards on February 10, 2010, becoming the first state to do so. *Source: Public Policy Notes, Volume 3, Issue 3, March 2010*

### Two SECA States Opt-Out of Race to the Top Competition

**Virginia** and **West Virginia** were the only SECA states that had previously submitted an application to skip round two of the **Race to the Top** grant competition. (Texas did not submit in round one.)

According to Governor Bob McDonnell of **Virginia**: "I cannot support set-

ting aside the proven *Virginia Standards of Learning program, nor commit to adopt these common core standards. Virginia's standards actually exceed those of the common core in most areas, and to be competitive for a RTTT grant under current rules, we would have to lower our standards.*" *Source: Letter to U.S. Dept of Education, May 26, 2010.*

**West Virginia** lawmakers failed to complete education reform legislation that would have strengthened their grant application. Governor Manchin has called a special session for July 19, 2010 to work through the proposed legislation. *Source: Press Release, June 2, 2010, [www.wv.gov](http://www.wv.gov)*

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*Would you like to know more about the Common Core Standards?*

In March 2010, SECA published a policy brief, *Common Core Standards*, that gives a brief summary of the standards and includes the statement from the Alliance for Childhood as an appendix. The brief can be found on the Public Policy page of the SECA website.

# Annie E. Casey Foundation Issues Report on Reading

*Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters* is a Kids Count Special Report that was released in May 2010. The report is based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading test in 2009, and the results weren't heartening.

The report highlights that millions of American children reach fourth grade without learning to read proficiently. Low state standards mask the extent of America's low reading proficiency, and several factors contribute to low reading proficiency including: readiness for

formal academics, absenteeism and lack of high quality learning opportunities.

The differences are particularly apparent based on race/ethnicity and economic status at the 4th grade.

- **All:** 83% of low-income students are considered below proficient vs. 55% of moderate and high-income students.
- **White:** 76% of low-income students vs. 52% of moderate/high-income students are below proficient.

- **Black:** 89% of low-income vs. 74% of moderate/high-income students are below proficient.
- **Hispanic:** 87% of low-income vs. 72% of moderate/high-income are below proficient.

**One of the recommendations from the report:** *Develop a coherent system of early care and education that aligns, integrates and coordinates what happens from birth through third grade so children are ready to take on the learning tasks associated with fourth grade and beyond.*

Source: <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>

## Kentucky Early Childhood Taskforce Issues Interim Report

The **Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Development and Education** issued an interim report to Governor Steve Beshear in April 2010.

This Task Force was created on February 19, 2009 by Executive Order 1009-154. The Task Force was charged with "reviewing the delivery of early childhood development and education services in Kentucky and recommending improvements to the system to accomplish:

- Greater coordination among pro-

viders of services to young children.

- Quality at all levels from early childcare through kindergarten.
- Agreement on what constitutes school readiness.

- Reliance on accepted early learning standards and assessment.

The interim report provides a "compendium of programs for children in the Commonwealth of Kentucky and also provides a foundation for the task force's continuing work on recommendations and best practices to ensure greater collaboration among providers of services to young children..."

For a copy of the report, go to [www.educationcabinet.ky.gov](http://www.educationcabinet.ky.gov)

**"A quality, comprehensive education and development system for our children is the key to our economic success in the future."**

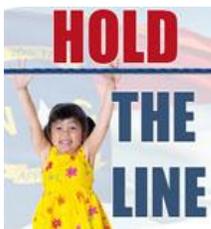
**Joseph Meyer & Janie Miller**

**Task Force Chairs**

## Virtual Advocacy Day: <http://ncchildren.wordpress.com>

**Smart Start of North Carolina** implemented an innovative *Virtual Advocacy Day* on Tuesday, May 18th, that took advantage of technology and perhaps will start a new trend in advocacy efforts.

Legislators in North Carolina are looking for budget cuts and Smart Start North Carolina, one of the oldest and most successful early childhood programs in the country, has been proposed for major cuts.



Advocates were encouraged to use Facebook, Twitter, websites and blogs to spread the word about keeping investments (**Hold the Line**) in programs that support young children. The message should include:

- Why investing in early education and care matters.

- What investments in young children in North Carolina look like.
- Why investments in early education and care are good for the economy.

They also posted a video with former North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt and American Idol finalist Anoop Desai on YouTube.

To view the video, go to [www.youtube.com/ncsmartstart.org](http://www.youtube.com/ncsmartstart.org)

# A Portrait of Northern Virginia's Children

In May 2010, Voices for Virginia's Children in partnership with The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia and the Health Systems Agency of Northern Virginia, released the first-ever snapshot of the status of Northern Virginia's children.

*A Portrait of Children in Northern Virginia* highlights demographic, economic and social trends that impact children and youth ages 0-18 in Northern Virginia.

Most of the country thinks of Northern Virginia as an affluent area that is located next to Washington, D.C.; how-

ever, the report points out that there are significant socio-economic differences between, and even within, Northern Virginia jurisdictions. The area has "pockets of poverty" where "low-income families, larger numbers of dropouts, larger numbers of expectant mothers who do not obtain adequate pre-natal care, and higher percentages of low birth weight babies are concentrated."

Some facts:

- Northern Virginia's population under 18 years of age has nearly doubled since 1980.

- Minority populations are present in substantial numbers in all Northern Virginia jurisdictions but are more highly concentrated along the Route 1 corridor.
- School populations are highly diverse. Only two of the region's school systems have a majority White, Non-Hispanic population.
- In each jurisdiction, wide income disparities between the wealthiest and poorest residents exist.

For a copy of the report, go to

<http://vakids.org/>

## Take a Texas Approach

The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 required governors to designate or establish a State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care, and Governor Perry of Texas established an 18 member Council in Texas in October 2009.

The Council is designed to assist the state in planning and implementation of initiatives that improve the quality, availability and coordination of services

for children from birth to school entry.

***From minutes of the 2nd meeting***  
***"Not all programs produce desired child outcomes. Focus on results for parents and children. Take a Texas approach to what works best and not try to replicate what other states are doing simply on face value."***

The Texas Council has met twice in 2010: January 13, 2010 and April 7, 2010. Activities of the Council will be coordinated through the Children's Learning Institute in Houston, Texas.

For more information on the federal legislation and specifics on your state, go to the SECA policy brief, *Early Childhood Advisory Councils*, on the Public Policy page of the SECA website.

[www.southernearlychildhood.org](http://www.southernearlychildhood.org)

## Good Child Care

Does good child care in the early years of a child's life have any impact on that child's functioning as an adolescent?

According to a new report from the *NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development*, higher quality care predicted higher academic achievement at age 15.

***Do Effects of Early Child Care Extend to Age 15 Years? Results from the NICHD Study of Early Care and***

*Youth Development* verifies what early childhood educators have known all along. Quality care makes a difference and can have a positive effect on a child's development and functioning in later years.

"Higher quality care predicted higher cognitive-academic achievement at age 15, with escalating positive effects at higher levels of quality." In other words, the better the quality of early care, the better the outcomes for chil-

dren.

The *NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development* is a longitudinal study initiated by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) in 1989 to answer the many questions about the relationship between child care experiences and characteristics and children's developmental outcomes.

Source: <https://secc.rti.org>

## Southern Early Childhood Association

1123 S. University, Ste 255  
Little Rock, AR 72204  
PO Box 55930  
Little Rock, AR 72215-5930

Phone: 800-305-SECA  
Fax: 501-227-5297  
E-mail:

info@southernearlychildhood.org

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.

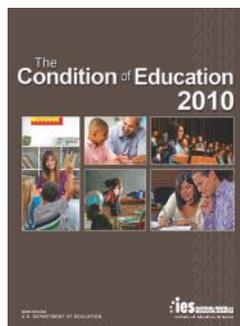
## Children in High Poverty Schools: 2010

The U.S. Department of Education released a report, *The Condition of Education 2010* in May.

This annual report includes information on a broad range of academic indicators across kindergarten through grade 12 and higher education.

The 2010 report included a special section on high-poverty schools. The findings included:

- The percentage of high-poverty schools rose from 12 percent to 17 percent between the 1999-2000 and 2007-2008 school years.
- By comparison, the poverty rate for children increased from 17 to 18 percent, perhaps indicat-



ing that more children were signing up for the meal program. (The poverty level in a school is determined by the percentage of children enrolled who qualify for the reduced and free meal program.)

- Cities were more likely to have a larger percentage of high-poverty schools. About 40% of city elementary schools fell into this category.
- **The South and West had a higher percentage (24%) of public elementary schools that were high poverty than the Northeast and Midwest. Mississippi had the highest percentage nationwide (53%).**

**Louisiana (52%) was also mentioned as having a larger percentage of high poverty schools.**

- Students at high poverty schools were more likely to be minority students and have limited English proficiency.
- Students in these schools are less likely to graduate from high school and go on to college.
- These children were less likely to be taught by teachers with advanced degrees.
- Principals in these schools were more likely to be female and minority.

For a copy of the report, go to

[http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010028\\_1.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010028_1.pdf)