

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

State Budgets Finally Affecting Pre-K Funding

As states have struggled with unprecedented budget shortfalls, state funded Pre-K programs have remained largely untouched; however, that trend has finally ended.

FY 2010 will be a tough year for Pre-K in many states, according to the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER). In the January/February 2010 issue of *Preschool Matters*, one page is devoted to the budget situations in many states and the implications for state pre-K programs.

For FY 2010, three budget scenarios have played out on the state level:

1. Budgets have been decreased.

2. Budgets have remained flat (essentially causing a decrease because of inflation).
3. Budgets have been increased, primarily through the use of federal stimulus funds.

In *Louisiana, North Carolina, and South Carolina*, pre-K budgets have been decreased from FY 2009 levels. These states all had well-established programs that were noted for quality initiatives.

In *Kentucky*, pre-K funding remained at 2009 funding levels. This was considered a victory because of the level of budget deficits that

the state was facing.

In *Florida* (a state facing a budget shortfall of more than 27%), the state used federal stimulus funds to increase its Voluntary Pre-kindergarten funding by more than 4% to serve more children. However, the expansion came at the price of decreasing per-child spending from FY 2009 levels.

As noted in the article, “some states responded to budget shortfalls by reducing funding per child and supports for quality, like professional development.”

Source: *Preschool Matters*, Volume 8, Issue 1

Stimulus Money to Finance Pre-K Teachers in Georgia

The state of Georgia has established a new program, **First-Time Incentive to Raise Standards for Teachers (FIRST)**, that will award \$1,200 each to 3,400 early childhood professionals who earn a CDA or other ECE credential for the first time between September 1,

2009 and February 28, 2011. Funding for this program was made available through Georgia’s portion of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009.

Eligibility for the incentive award includes working in a child care center or group

day care home licensed by Bright from the Start or Department of Defense, in a registered family day care home, or a state-funded pre-K program. *Care Solutions* will manage the program.

For more information go to:

www.caresolutions.com

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New from SECA

Professional Development Systems and the SECA States

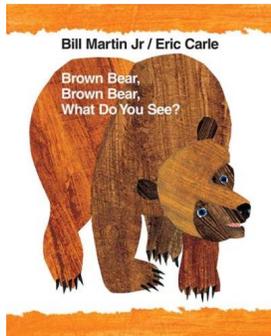
Includes a PowerPoint presentation and supplemental background document.

southernearlychildhood.org/policy.php

Brown Bear and Bill Martin, Jr.: No Longer on the List

In January, the **Texas Board of Education** did an initial review of the state's new lineup of social studies standards (part of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) and, in the process, managed to ban a favorite children's book (and author) from the 3rd grade curriculum.

Author Bill Martin Jr. shares a name with a DePaul



University professor of philosophy and the author of *Ethical Marxism: The Categorical Imperative of Liberation*. The Board intended to ban the DePaul professor but instead banned the author of the children's book. (He was slated to be included along with writers like Laura Ingalls Wilder as a major contributor to American culture.)

Along with his friend, Eric Carle, Mr. Martin contributed many of the "classics" in early childhood literature. The children's book author spent the last years of his life in Commerce, Texas and, if you go to Texas A & M Univer-



sity at Commerce, you'll find the Bill Martin Jr. Library.

The Texas Board of Education will

meet again in March 2010 and will have the opportunity to rectify their mistake. Sources: *Education Week*. February 3, 2010/www.billmartinjr.com

We're Going in the Wrong Direction: Teenage Pregnancy

After declining or leveling off for the past 15 years, **the pregnancy rate among teenagers rose again in 2006**, according to a report by the Guttmacher Institute.

Between 2005 and 2006 (the most recent year for which national data are available) the pregnancy rate among 15-19 year olds increased by 3%.

Between 1988 and 2000, teenage pregnancy rates declined in every state, and between 2000 and 2005 they continued

to decline in every SECA state .

In 2005, Texas (4th) and Mississippi (5th) earned the distinction of being among the top five states in the teen pregnancy rate (number of pregnancies per 1,000 teens.) In 2005 teenage births

For a copy of the policy brief and state statistical tables, go to www.guttmacher.org.

(pregnancies not terminated) were highest in Texas (1st), Mississippi (3rd) and Arkansas (4th).

Among states with available data, Arkansas had the highest pregnancy rate among non-Hispanic whites. Arkansas was followed closely by Tennessee, South Carolina, Kentucky, West Virginia and Mississippi. In this case, being at the top isn't something to brag about! Source: www.guttmacher.org

State Professional Development Systems: New Resources

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices has published *Building an Early Childhood Professional Development System*. The policy brief is designed to identify the initial steps that governors can take to build a comprehensive early childhood professional development system in their states. The brief was coauthored by NAEYC and is based on the NAEYC state policy blueprint.

The brief recommends that four initial steps be taken to build a comprehensive system:

- Coordinate early childhood professional development policies across programs and funding sources.
- Implement research-based standards for early childhood professional development.
- Ensure access to professional development opportunities for all early

childhood personnel.

- Gather and use data on characteristics of the early childhood workforce to improve professional and program quality.

For a copy of the NAEYC state policy blueprint, go to <http://www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi>

For a copy of the NGA brief go to www.nga.org

States Coming Together to Develop Common Assessments

Six multi-state consortia are now in discussions concerning common tests across states, and most states have signed up for more than one consortium.

These consortia have formed in large part because of a promise from the US Department of Education to provide \$350 million in assessment funding this month. The funds are being provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The six consortia include:

SMARTER—focusing on adaptive-testing technology.

MOSAIC—focusing on professional development for classroom-based formative assessment techniques.

Balanced Assessment Consortium (co-leader West Virginia) - seeking an assessment system that would include curriculum-embedded, performance-based tasks scored by teachers throughout the year.

National Center on Education and the Economy - focusing on high school exams/aligning curriculum, instruction and testing in the early high school grades with comprehensive, syllabus-based “board examinations” like those in Britain.

Achieve - working to keep the other consortia focused on crafting exams that produce comparable results across states.

Florida-led consortium that has a goal of common year-end assessments with a shared proficiency definition and grade-by-grade benchmarks toward college and career readiness.

The SECA States of Texas and Virginia have not joined a consortium. Virginia remains committed to its own Standards of Learning testing program.

Kentucky First State to Adopt Core Academic Standards

On February 10, 2010, the Kentucky Board of Education, the Council on Postsecondary Education and the Education Professional Standards Board of Kentucky signed a resolution that directed their respective agencies to implement the Common Core State Standards in English/language arts and mathematics. This resolution formalized Kentucky’s agreement to integrate the standards into the state’s public education system, and **Kentucky became**

the first state in the nation to formally adopt the standards.

“This is an historic moment for Kentucky...teachers will have a blueprint to move the state forward in P-12 education.”

**Kentucky Board of Education Chair
Joe Brothers, 2/10/2010**

This action was particularly noteworthy because the Common Core State Standards were not finalized at the time of adoption.

The draft standards were released on March 10, 2010 for public comment and can be found at

<http://www.corestandards.org/>.

Arkansas Fiscal Session: Budgets and Scholarships

The Arkansas General Assembly convened its initial fiscal session on February 8, 2010. Formerly, the Arkansas General Assembly met every other year in regular session. A new constitutional amendment requires a “fiscal only” session to be convened every other year.

Two major issues were considered by the Arkansas General Assembly in 2010: the state budget and the level of funding that would be available to recipients of

the college scholarships funded by lottery proceeds.

The Revenue Stabilization Act (Arkansas’s budget act) included increases for most major agencies. The Public School Fund increased from \$1.81 billion to \$1.89 billion. The Department of Human Services increased from \$975.3 million to \$1.02 billion (although Medicaid was held at continuing levels) and the 4-year universities,

two-year colleges and technical colleges all saw increases.

The lottery scholarships were set at \$5,000 for the 4-year institutions and \$2,500 for the 2-year institutions. Recipients must have a 2.5 grade point average, and complete the Smart Core curriculum, or score at least a 19 on the ACT, or perform proficient or better on the End-of-Course exams.

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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.

The Obama Budget for FY 2011: Early Childhood Highlights

On February 1, 2010, President Obama released his budget proposal for FY 2011 and it includes significant increases in several programs that benefit children and families.

Highlights from the Budget

- The budget proposes a **\$1.6 billion increase for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)**. The increase would include \$800 million in discretionary funds, appropriated on an annual basis with no state match required, and \$800 million in mandatory funds, state match required. Mandatory funding would be adjusted each year after FY 2011 for inflation. The additional funding

would allow for an increase in the funding set aside for quality activities.

- A **\$989 million increase in Head Start and Early Head Start** would maintain funding for the children funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).
- The **Early Learning Challenge Fund** at \$9 billion over 10 years is included in the budget. (This initiative is the same as the one included in the House bill passed last year.)
- A **\$10 billion increase over 10 years for child nutrition programs**, including the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

- An **\$87 million increase for U.S. military child development**.

Programs with Flat Funding Levels

- **IDEA Part C** for Infants & Toddlers & **Part B/Section 619** Preschool Grants
- **Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CAMPIS)**
- **21st Century Community Learning Centers**

A new **Striving Readers** literacy program would consolidate a number of existing programs and **Even Start** would be eliminated as a separate program.

Source: www.nwlc.org