

# Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

## Who Is Your State's "Stimulus Czar"?

With the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), state governments have rushed to design accountability systems that will meet the tests of transparency and accountability, the hallmarks of the AARA legislation.

In response to the significant influx of federal dollars into existing and new state systems and programs, SECA Governors have appointed "Stimulus Czars", point persons or coordinating bodies to oversee the use of these funds. (The Obama administration has asked each state to name an "implementation czar" or watchdog, but very few states are calling these persons "czars" in spite of the administration's terminol-

ogy.)

The ARRA doesn't define the role or qualifications of this person. The Governor is free to appoint whomever he or she wishes, and each state has made a decision about what the responsibilities of this position will be. In some states they will head up task forces that will plan where the money will be spent: in others, they will be the Governor's liaison to the state agencies and Legislature. Following is the list of the SECA state "point persons" .

**Alabama** Former Chief Justice Drayton Nabers, *AL Supreme Court* **Arkansas** Chris Masingill, *Gov's Office* **Florida** Don Winstead, *Deputy Director, Dept of Children & Families* **Georgia**

Celeste Osborn, *Deputy Chief Financial Officer* **Kentucky** Larry Hayes, *Secretary of the Governor's Executive Cabinet* **Mississippi** Marie Thomas Sanderson, *Federal Policy Director, Gov's Office* **Oklahoma** Steve Burrage, *State Auditor* **South Carolina** Richard Eckstrom, *Comptroller General* **Tennessee** Charles Harrison, *Asst to the Comptroller of the Treasury* **Texas** Jin Dunnam, *State Representative* **Virginia** Wayne Turnage, *Gov's Chief of Staff* **West Virginia** Nancy Guthrie, *State Representative*  
*Source: www.stateline.org*



Richard Eckstrom, Comptroller General, South Carolina

## Achievement Gap in Louisiana Narrows

According to a study published in April 2009 by The Education Trust, Louisiana was the only state in the country to demonstrate a significant narrowing of the achievement gap between African-American and white students in both fourth-grade reading and

eighth-grade math. This review was based on data from the National Assessment of Education Progress.

All SECA states (except Kentucky and Tennessee) showed a "statistically significant increase in achievement or narrowing of the gap" in fourth-grade reading. The

results for Kentucky and Tennessee showed a "change in achievement or the gap was not statistically significant".

For a copy of the report or the "quick look" chart that provides a comparative state snapshot, go to <http://www2.edtrust.org>.

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### Special points of interest:

- South Carolina and the Stimulus
- AR Lottery and College Scholarships
- The Debate: Restraint & Seclusion
- West Virginia & QRIS

## Student Files Suit to Ensure South Carolina Accesses Stimulus Funds

On April 16th, a South Carolina high school student, Casey Edwards of Chapin High School, filed suit in the state's highest court, asking that the way be cleared for the state of South Carolina to receive the millions of stimulus dollars for education that were allotted to the state. Governor Mark Sanford has continued to resist applying for funds totaling \$700 million under the ARRA. The majority of this money is earmarked for education, and South Carolina educators are predicting significant teacher layoffs if the state doesn't access the federal money. Governor Sanford maintains the position that the money be used to "pay down" the state's debt but cannot win

approval from the federal government for this plan.

Although the federal legislation that authorized the ARRA contained a provision allowing the State Legislature to override the Governor, opinions issued as the debate has continued do not support that authority. Governor Sanford continues to advocate that he has sole authority to request the funds.

On April 29, 2009, the South Carolina Legislature voted to force the Governor to request the \$350 million available. The Senate plans to put \$185 million of

stimulus cash into public schools to help maintain teacher jobs. It also will put \$100 million into colleges to eliminate steep tuition increases. The remainder of the funds will go mostly into law enforcement and prisons.

That same day, the South Carolina Supreme Court rejected the lawsuit filed by Ms. Edwards. The Court stated that the lawsuit was not appropriate "until the General Assembly has taken, as it is authorized to

do, measures to appropriate the funds at issue."

Sources: [www.charlestonbusiness.com](http://www.charlestonbusiness.com)

[www.eschoolnews.com](http://www.eschoolnews.com)



Governor Mark Sanford

## Arkansas Creates State Lottery to Fund College Scholarships

In November 2008, Arkansas voters approved a ballot initiative that authorized the establishment of a lottery in Arkansas.

For the last 3 months, the Arkansas Legislature has hammered out the details on the operation of the lottery, and Governor Mike Beebe signed the bills into law on March 27, 2009. The Governor anticipates that the lottery might be operating by the end of 2009 and noted that the state would provide

start-up money as needed with the expectation that those funds would be re-paid within the same fiscal year from lottery proceeds.

Lieutenant Governor Bill Halter spearheaded the drive for the constitutional amendment that authorized the lottery.

**We're the first state where all of the lottery proceeds will go to college scholarships."**

**Lt. Governor Bill Halter**

The lottery proceeds are dedicated exclusively to college scholarships for students. Arkansas is now one of 43 states with a lottery; however, it is the only state in which the funds are earmarked *only* for college scholarships.

A new Lottery Commission has been appointed by the Governor, House Speaker and Senate President-Pro-Tem. The panel will write rules for lottery operations, hire a director and staff, select a lottery vendor, choose retailers and award prizes.

## Oklahoma and the Office of Accountability

The Oklahoma Legislature recently sent a measure to Governor Brad Henry that will remove the Office of Accountability from the Department of Education and make the new **Office of Education Quality and Accountability** an independent state agency.

The former Office of Accountability was responsible for analyzing student test scores and lawmakers hope the move from the Department of Educa-

tion will give the Office more autonomy and enhance the achievement of Oklahoma's students.

In 2007, Oklahoma was given a score of "F" in accountability in a study by the US Chamber of Commerce. Although the state received an "A" for its 21st century teaching workforce, it received an "F" in academic achievement and "truth in advertising" about student profi-

ciency. The state also received a "D" in data quality. Source: *Education Week*, April 29, 2009



Ronia Davison, Sadler Arts Academy  
2008 OK Milken Educator

# West Virginia Legislature Authorizes State QRIS System

In the closing minutes of the West Virginia Legislature session, early childhood education advocates gained a huge victory with the passage of Senate Bill 498. This bill authorized the creation of a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) in West Virginia and was the result of a multi-year campaign by groups such as the West Virginia KIDS COUNT Fund to support new state investments to improve childcare quality.

The bill is currently on the Governor's desk and is awaiting his signature. As soon as his signature is affixed to the

bill, the authorization of the system is completed.

The West Virginia Legislature has not passed a state budget, and the Legislature will return in May to finalize the budget work. Because of the economic downturn, advocates do not foresee a new state appropriation to fund the system and are encouraging the state to use the federal stimulus childcare funds to start the pilots. Governor Manchin is concerned about using one-time money to support a long term program commitment, so advocates have their work ahead of them to get the funding

in place to implement the system.

That said, congratulations to West Virginia for taking that step toward quality services for children!



**Governor Manchin & WV Kids Count Fund Representatives**

## Restraint & Seclusion: Better Behavior?

The National Disability Rights Network has issued a new report, *School Is Not Supposed to Hurt*. The report is a compilation of incidents in which children were injured by restraint or seclusion, including a 13-year-old Georgia boy, Jonathan King.

Jonathan was diagnosed with depression and ADHD and hanged himself in a seclusion room at his school for children with emotional disorders. His death and the death of a Wisconsin girl who was restrained have sparked an investigation into these practices and

the potential benefits and dangers.

About one-half of the SECA states have statewide laws, policies or guidelines on restraint or seclusion. Those states include: Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina and Florida. SECA states without those policies include Oklahoma, Lou-

isiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and West Virginia.

*Source: National Disabilities Rights Network*

U.S. Representative George Miller (D-CA), the chairman of the US House Education & Labor Committee has directed the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to research and release a report on the use of restraints and seclusion in schools. The report is expected sometime in the next few weeks

*Source: Education Week, April 22, 2009*

**"No child should be at risk or in danger while at school, no matter what the circumstances."**

**US Representative George Miller**

## SECA "Signs-On" to Congressional Letters

At the end of April 2009, the Public Policy Commission of the SECA Board of Directors agreed to support two Congressional "sign-on" letters. These letters are circulated throughout the organizations that work in early childhood to gather as many signatories as possible and are generally produced by a consortium of Washington DC based organizations, including NAEYC and the National Women's Law Center.

The current letters to which SECA's

name will be affixed are:

- A letter to Senators Tom Harkin and Arlen Specter of the Subcommittee on Labor, Health & Human Services, Education Appropriations, that encourages them to support funding for the **Early Childhood Education Professional Development and Career System** competitive grants to states, Title VIII Part I of the Higher Education Opportunity Act. This funding would support state systems.
- A letter to Senators asking that the Appropriations Committee include \$100 million of initial funding for the **Loan Forgiveness for Services in Areas of National Need**. Under this program, loan forgiveness for student loans would benefit critical human services fields such as early childhood education, child welfare and health & medical specialists.

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## Southern Early Childhood Association

1123 South University, Ste 255  
Little Rock, AR 72204

Phone: 800-305-SECA

Fax: 501-227-5297

Email: [info@southernearlychildhood.org](mailto: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.*

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## Nutrition Programs To Be Reauthorized in 2009

**The Child Care & Adult Food Program and WIC are up for reauthorization in 2009.**

The Child Care & Adult Food Program provides meals and nutrition for children in child care, school (breakfast and lunch programs), during out-of-school time in after-school care, on weekends and during the summer. There is also an adult component of this program that provides nutrition assistance to elderly and impaired adults. The summer food program can be particularly beneficial to children in rural areas when school is not in session.

The WIC program is available to low-income at-risk pregnant and postpartum mothers to ensure the health of mothers and very young children. The program provides

nutrition services, health and social service referrals, and culturally appropriate nutritious foods.

According to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), "The extraordinarily successful, cost-effective child nutrition programs play a critical role in helping children, especially those in low-income families, achieve access to quality nutrition, child care, education and enrichment activities while improving their overall health, development, and school achievement."

A group of organizations have begun to lobby federal officials and Congressional representatives to consider the following when reauthorizing these programs. The reauthorization should:

1. Assure and strengthen program access and support participation by underserved children and communities.

2. Enhance nutrition quality and provide adequate meal reimbursements.
3. Modernize technology and simplify program administration and operation.

Priorities in the bill should include:

- Improving access to nutritious foods in all programs served through the CCAFP.
- Enhancing the nutritional environment through WIC to promote healthy eating habits for women and children.
- Modernizing and streamlining program operations to improve program integrity and efficiency and to make the system "more user friendly".

*For more information, go to*  
[www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org)

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