

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity Releases Report

This month, the White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity released its report to the President. The report, *Solving the Problem of Childhood Obesity Within a Generation*, includes recommendations to:

- Create a healthy start on life for our children, from pregnancy through early childhood.
- Empower parents and caregivers to make healthy choices for their families.
- Ensure access to healthy, affordable food.
- Increase opportunities

for physical activity. According to the report, “one in five children are overweight or obese by the time they reach their 6th birthday and over half of obese children become overweight at or before age two....Between 1980 and 2001, the prevalence of overweight infants under six months almost doubled, from 3.4% to 5.9%.”

In the section of the report concerning Early Childhood, the recommendations for reducing the risk of obesity in the early years include:

- Strengthening prenatal care;
- Promoting breastfeeding;

- Evaluating the impact of chemical influences in the environment;
- Reducing “screen time”; and
- Improving the quality of our nation’s child care settings so they can consistently support our children’s healthy development.



The First Lady Releases the Report

<http://www.letsmove.gov>

Arkansas Legislature Approves “Bright Beginnings”

On the third attempt to get approval for the new QRIS system in Arkansas, *Bright Beginnings*, through the Administrative Rules and Regulation Subcommittee of the Arkansas Legislature, advocates and agency staff were finally successful this month.

The new system will classify

centers as meeting one of three levels of advanced standards. **Level 1** includes requirements for professional development for directors and staff and documentation in certain areas. *Estimated cost per center: \$800.*

Level 2 increases the requirements for professional

development and more detailed documentation. *Estimated cost per center: \$5,800. Level 3* requires certain scores in an on-site evaluation and additional professional development. *Estimated cost per center: \$9,800. Sources: <http://www.arkansas.gov/childcare/qris.html>—Arkansas Democrat Gazette, May 12, 2010*

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Inside this issue:

Summer Food Program	2
Military Families	2
Pilot Child Care Program	2
West Virginia Incumbent Loses	3
Early Beginnings	3
Crist Changes Parties	3
State of Preschool 2009	4

Confused by the Acronyms & Terms?

You're not alone and Zero to Three has just released an informational guide entitled *Glossary of Policy & Advocacy Terms: A Guide to the ABC's & Acronyms of the Infant-Toddler Policy Process*.

You can find it at

<http://zttcfm.convio.net>

Improving Child Nutrition During Summer Break

The United States Department of Agriculture announced two statewide, multi-year demonstration projects in **Arkansas** and **Mississippi** on May 11, 2010.

These projects are designed to test innovative approaches for increasing participation in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and will be implemented in the summer of 2010.

The *Extending Length of Operation Incentive Program in Arkansas* will provide funding to sponsors that operate SFSP meal sites for a minimum of 40 days in the summer. An additional

50 cent reimbursement for each lunch served at these sites will be provided. **Purpose of the Demonstration:** To determine if a financial incentive can encourage programs of longer duration, thereby improving access to meals for low-income children for a greater portion of the summer.

The *Activity Incentive Project in Mississippi* will provide funding to sponsors to plan and implement enrichment or recreational activities at SFSP meal sites. **Purpose of the Demonstration:** Activities and special events help draw children. Will that be enough to in-

crease participation?

Nationally, an average of 20% of children who receive free or reduced-price lunches at school also participate in a summer food program. Only 10.5% of those children in Arkansas and 7.9% of those children in Mississippi participated last year.

“Our efforts to combat hunger cannot end when the school bell rings on the last day of the school year....” USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack

Source: www.usda.gov, News Release No. 0249.10/May 11, 2010.

Military Families: A Coordinated Federal Approach

First Lady Michelle Obama announced on May 12, 2010 a *Presidential Directive on Military Families*. President Obama has directed the National Security Staff to lead a new 90-day review to develop a coordinated Federal government approach to supporting and engaging military families. The review will involve nearly twenty federal agencies as well as the White House Domestic Policy and National Economic Councils and the offices of the Vice-President, the First Lady and Dr. Jill Biden. The

review will:

- Set strategic military family priorities for the next ten years and identify key military family concerns and challenges.
- Review a cross section of public and private programs to identify

“With just one percent of our population—our troops—doing 100 percent of the fighting, our military families are being tested like never before.”
First Lady Obama

promising ideas and programs.

- Develop options for departments to integrate military family matters into their strategic and budgetary priorities.
- Strengthen feedback mechanisms for military families to voice their concerns and views on the effectiveness and future direction of relevant Federal programs and policies.

Source: www.whitehouse.gov

Pilot Child Care Program Created in Veterans Bill

President Obama signed the *Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act* on May 7, 2010. This act significantly expands health services available to veterans, including mental health and counseling services to veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. It also includes a provision to begin a **pilot child care program** for veterans receiving intensive medical care and expands support for homeless veterans. President Obama said the legislation marks

a “major step forward in America’s commitment to families and caregivers who tend to our wounded warriors every day.”

The Act also:

- Allows the Veterans Administration to utilize hospitals outside of the VA system to treat returning soldiers with brain injuries.
- Eliminates co-payments for “catastrophically disabled” veterans

- Increases housing and transportation assistance for veterans living far from hospitals in rural areas.
- Expands health care services for women veterans, including maternity leave for newborns.

“Just as we have a responsibility to train and equip them when we send them into harm’s way, we have a responsibility to take care of them when they return home.”

Source: www.whitehouse.gov

Election 2010: West Virginia Incumbent Loses



Representative Mollohan

On May 11, 2010, Representative Alan Mollohan, a Democratic Representative from West Virginia, became the second

incumbent member of the US Congress to lose his re-election bid. Representative Mollohan lost his primary election to state Senator Mike Olivero by a wide margin, according to unofficial election results.

Mollohan was first elected to Congress in 1982 but recently had been under investigation as to whether he profited financially from non-profit organizations in West Virginia. The Justice Department declined to file charges; however, the controversy stayed with him during the primary campaign.

Representative Mollohan also told me-

dia that he felt that the anti-incumbent mood throughout the US was a factor in his defeat.

The first casualty of the “anti-incumbent” mood proved to be a Republican in Utah. US Senator Robert Bennett failed to even qualify for the Republican primary in this home state. The GOP did not support him at their state convention.

It is not anticipated that the Republicans will lose the seat in Utah and Democrats are waging a fierce campaign to maintain the seat in West Virginia.

Source: www.rttnews.com

Early Beginnings: Early Literacy Knowledge & Instruction

The National Institute for Literacy has released a new publication, *Early Beginnings: Early Literacy Knowledge and Instruction*. This is the first in the Institute’s Cornerstone series—research based publications that support early literacy practices.

Early Beginnings draws on core findings from the final report of the National Early Literacy Panel and is “intended as a guide to help early childhood admin-

istrators, supervisors and professional development staff support teachers in increasing their knowledge and refining their literacy practice.”

The report:

- Describes early predictors of later

literacy skills.

- Suggests ways to share this information and ways to apply it to teaching practice with teachers.

A practical guide, it is designed to help teachers to understand what the research says about the early literacy skills that are essential to children’s later success in reading. A limited number of printed copies are available.

Download from www.nifl.org

Call 1-800-228-8813 to order

Order online: at www.edpubs.gov

Election 2010: Florida Governor to Run as an Independent

On April 29, 2010, Florida Governor Charlie Crist announced that he is abandoning the Republican party in his quest to become a US Senator from Florida and will appear on the ballot as an “independent”.

During recent weeks, Governor Crist has trailed Florida House Speaker Marco Rubio in polls leading up to the August 24th primary. Rubio is a Republican backed by the Tea Party movement.

Rubio, 38, gained momentum in April, winning the endorsement of prominent Republicans such as Vice President Dick Cheney, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney and House Minority Whip Eric Cantor of Virginia.

In his announcement, Governor Crist stated that “*Unfortunately, our political system is broken....Americans have had enough of political fighting...They want progress and not gridlock.*”

The Senate seat is currently held by Senator George LeMieux who was appointed by Crist. The Democratic challenger is Rep. Kendrick Meek. Source:

Arkansas Democrat Gazette/April 30, 2010



Governor Charlie Crist

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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.

The State of Preschool 2009

The National Institute for Early Education Research has published the latest in its series of reports on the "state of preschool" in the United States. The 2009 yearbook chronicles the latest developments across the country in state funded preschool programs and draws some conclusions about 2009.



- Enrollment increased by 81,593 children in 2009, with over 1.2 million served across the US.

- State's pre-K enrollment of 3- and 4-year olds exceeded 1.5 million, including both general and special education.
- Twenty-nine states increased the percent of 3- and 4-year olds enrolled; nine states decreased.
- Eight states improved on NIEER's quality standards; three states lost ground.
- State pre-K spending increased slightly per child to \$4,143.
- Total funding for state pre-K rose to more than \$5 billion.

Of the top 10 states serving 4-year-olds, the SECA region had seven (7) of the ten. **Oklahoma** led the way at

#1, with #2 **Florida**, #3 **Georgia**, #5 **West Virginia**, #7 **Texas**, #8 **Arkansas**, and #10 **South Carolina**. The only SECA state without a state funded pre-K program remains Mississippi. **Kentucky and West Virginia** ranked in the top 5 states serving 3-year-olds.

New research on state funded programs was highlighted in the report. Three of the five studies cited included SECA states:

- Five State Study conducted by NIEER (OK, SC, WV)
- Louisiana LA-4 Evaluation
- Tulsa, Oklahoma Program Evaluation

www.nieer.org