

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

“A New Diverse Majority: Students of Color in the South’s Public Schools”

For the first time in the nation’s history, both low-income and minority children comprise a majority of the enrollment in public schools in the region of the country, the South.

The demographic shift has been driven by several factors: an influx of Latinos and members of other ethnic groups, the return of many African-American families to the South who had previously migrated to other regions of the country, and higher birthrates among both blacks and Latinos than among whites.

According to the report released by the Southern Education Foundation, A

New Diverse Majority: Students of Color in the South’s Public Schools, African-American, Latino, Asian-Pacific Islanders, American Indian and multi-racial children now constitute slightly more than half of all students attending public schools in the South. In 2009, 49% of the students in Southern public schools were White, 27% were Black, 20% were Hispanic, 3% were Asian-Pacific and 1% were Native American & Other.

Four SECA states (Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi & Georgia) now have a majority of both low income and students of color. Florida has a majority of

students of color and a large percentage of low income students (not a majority). North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama and Oklahoma have a majority of low income students and a large percentage of students of color (not a majority). Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky and West Virginia have a majority of low income students but less than 40% who are students of color. Only Virginia has neither a majority of low income students or students of color.

For a copy of the report and complete statistics, go to: www.southerneducation.org.

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The February 10, 2010 issue of *Education Week* includes a special section entitled *Schools & the Stimulus* and features an article on the use of stimulus funds in **Arkansas**. The article is entitled, *State’s Fiscal Stability Allows for Long View*, and it sounds a positive note for one of the SECA states.

The US Senate and Presidential Nominations: Is the Process Still Working?

The US Senate has a constitutional requirement to provide “advice and consent” on presidential nominations and, in 2010, that process took on a whole new meaning when a US Senator from Alabama put a “blanket hold” on all

presidential nominations, effectively stopping consideration of all pending nominations. *Senator Richard Shelby of Alabama* put the hold on about 70 nominations for a few days, dropping the hold after President Obama vowed to

make recess appointments. Although Senator Shelby is a Republican, the same tactic has been used by Democrats. “Is this really what the Founding Fathers had in mind?” *Source: The senator who would be king, Miami Herald, 2-10-2010*

Virginia: Budget Amendments and Pre-K

The Virginia General Assembly is in session and legislators are struggling to eliminate a \$4 billion budget gap.

According to **Voices for Virginia's Children**, 11 budget amendments have been filed that would either eliminate or reduce Virginia's support of Pre-K for at-risk children.

Amendment 132 #30h by Carrico would completely eliminate the Pre-K program. It would also transfer the Remedial Summer School, ESL, and Academic Year Governor's School Programs into the Lottery Proceeds Fund

account. The Virtual Virginia program would also be transferred into the Lottery Proceeds Fund for the first year.

Budget savings: \$154,006,000

Amendment 132 #4s by Wampler suspends state support for the Virginia Preschool Initiative for At-Risk Four-Year-Olds. It also moves SOQ English as a Second Language, Remedial Summer School, and a portion of Textbooks to the Lottery funding source.

Budget savings: \$149,934,921

Amendment 132 #26h by O'Bannon reduces funding for the Virginia Pre-

school program by \$20.5 million over two years.

Other amendments have similar features, and all amendments that reduce or eliminate pre-K funding **are opposed by Voices for Virginia's Children**.

Additionally, two budget amendments create a block grant for Pre-K and one amendment by Wampler eliminates funding for the **Virginia Early Childhood Foundation**.

For a budget amendment summary and tracking summary of bills, go to www.vakids.org.

New Federal Center on Technology and Learning

A new national educational research center, the *National Center for Research in Advanced Information and Digital Technologies* has received \$500,000 for 2010 from Congress through the U.S. Department of Education. This funding will support the initial start-up of the Center.

The Center was created in 2008 through amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1965 and is designed

to support research into using advanced technologies to support learning in K-12, higher education, and corporate and government training.

As stated in Section 802 of the Higher Education Act, "the purpose of the

The Center was granted the authority in SEC. 802 to award grants and contracts on a competitive basis for educational research projects.

center shall be to support a comprehensive research and development program to harness the increasing capacity of advanced information and digital technologies to improve all levels of learning and education, formal and informal, in order to provide Americans with the knowledge and skills need to compete in the global economy. "

The Board of the Center will be comprised of 9 members, appointed by the US Secretary of Education.

Head Start Gains Fade by First Grade According to Report

The Head Start Impact Study Final Report was presented in January to the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The goals of the study were:

- To determine the impact of Head Start on children's school readiness, and to determine parental practices that support children's development.

- To determine under what circumstances Head Start achieves its greatest impact and for which children.

The study was conducted with a nationally representative sample of 84 grantee/delegate agencies and included nearly 5,000 children. Data collection began in 2002 and continued through 2006. Key findings included:

- There were *statistically significant differences* between the Head Start

and control group on every measure of children's *preschool experiences* measured in this study.

- Advantages children gained during their participation yielded only a *few statistically significant differences at the end of 1st grade* for the sample as a whole.

Source: www.acf.hhs.gov

Quality Counts 2010: How the SECA States Fared

Education Week recently published the 14th edition of *Quality Counts*, an annual report card on the public schools in America. This report is based on:

- “The detailed data collection and analysis of the Editorial Project in Education Research Center that provides comprehensive, state-by-state grading in key areas of state policy and performance, and
- The rigorous investigation of a timely issue in education policy by the *Education Week* reporting staff.” *This year’s special theme is centered around common academic standards that would apply in all states.*

Quality Counts 2010 assigns state grades in four categories: the teaching profession; standards, assessments, and accountability; school finance; and the **Chance-for-Success Index**.

The **Chance-for-Success Index** assesses the role of education at key stages of a person’s life, from early childhood to adulthood. (*The nation as a whole earns a C+ on this index.*) The Index measures these indicators in **Early Foundations**: Family Income, Parent Education, Parental Employment, and Linguistic Integration. In the **School Years**, it measures Preschool Enrollment, Kindergarten Enrollment, 4th

Grade Reading, 8th Grade Mathematics, High School Graduation and Young Adult Education.

How did the SECA states compare?

B - Virginia

C - Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas

C minus - Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Tennessee, West Virginia

D plus - Mississippi

Source: *Quality Counts 2010*, www.edweek.org

Race to the Top: Not All SECA States Applied

The **Race to the Top Fund** is a new federal program that is designed to assist states in reforming their educational systems. The Fund is a \$4 billion competitive grant program, and the initial deadline for submission was January 19, 2010.

States have been asked to submit proposals that will advance reforms in four specific areas:

1. Adopting standards and assessments for students.
2. Developing data systems that measure student growth and success.
3. Recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers.
4. Turning around the lowest-achieving schools.

“Race to the Top winners will help trailblaze effective reforms and provide examples for State and local school districts throughout the country to follow as they too are hard at work on reforms that can transform our schools for decades to come.”

All SECA states except **Texas and Mississippi** submitted applications for the Race to the Top Fund.

Source: www2.ed.gov

The Costs of Disinvestment: Don’t Cut Early Childhood Programs

The **Partnership for America’s Economic Success** has published an issue brief, *The Costs of Disinvestment: Why States Can’t Afford to Cut Smart Early Childhood Programs*. The issue brief makes the case that it is economically unwise for states to cut early childhood programs because they are investments that benefit states now and in the future.

Quality home visiting programs can

reduce costs by helping to prevent low-birthweight births and saving some of the costs in annual child-abuse and neglect-related programs. **Effective pre-K programs** reduce grade retention and special education services as well as helping kindergarten teachers to be more effective in working with prepared learners. **Early childhood programs** stimulate the local economy, through purchases and employment opportunities and support of working

parents.

The **Partnership for America’s Economic Success** is a national coalition of business executives, economists, funders and civic leaders mobilizing to improve tomorrow’s economy through smart policy investments in young children today. It is managed by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Source: www.PartnershipForSuccess.org

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"A Voice for Southern
Children"

We're on the Web!
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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.

Let's Move: The First Lady's Childhood Obesity Campaign

On February 9, 2010, First Lady Michelle Obama announced a campaign that will be focused on helping America solve its childhood obesity problem.

To support **Let's Move** and facilitate and coordinate partnerships, the nation's leading children's health foundations have created a new independent foundation, the **Partnership for a Healthier America**. This new foundation is designed to enhance and accelerate existing efforts at addressing childhood obesity and will generate new commitments towards a national goal of solving the childhood obesity problem within a generation.

Over the past 30 years, childhood

obesity rates in America have tripled and the South is particularly affected by this health problem. Obesity related diseases (cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure and asthma) are a leading cause of health related problems in children and adults and accounted for \$147 billion in obesity related medical costs in the last year.

One-third of all children born in 2000 or later are anticipated to suffer from diabetes at some point in their lives, and diabetes is directly related to obesity in most cases.

President Obama kicked off the campaign launch by signing a presidential Memorandum that created the Task Force on Childhood Obe-

sity which will include various federal agencies. Within 90 days, the Task Force will conduct a review of every program and policy relating to child nutrition and physical activity and develop a national action plan that maximizes federal resources and sets benchmarks toward the campaign's goal.

"The physical and emotional health of an entire generation and the economic health and security of our nation is at stake," said Mrs. Obama. **"This isn't the kind of problem that can be solved overnight, but with everyone working together, it can be solved. So, let's move."**

Source: www.letsmove.gov
