

# Public Policy Notes

## Southern Early Childhood Association

### North Carolina and Pre-K: The Fight Has Just Begun

On Monday, July 18, 2011, North Carolina Superior Court Judge Howard Manning Jr. issued an order stating that the state could not limit enrollment in a pre-kindergarten program for at-risk children.

The funding for the program, *More at Four*, was reduced significantly in the budget adopted by the North Carolina General Assembly that took effect in July, 2011. (See the July 2011 edition of *Public Policy Notes* for more information about the legislative action.) This order could force the General Assembly to re-do part of the \$19.7 billion budget that it had just adopted.

The lawsuit was filed by 5 low-wealth school districts in the counties of Hoke, Robeson, Vance, Halifax and Cumberland. They contended that the state budget could not ensure that “every child has a constitutional right to an education that allows them to compete for a job or higher education and to be a functional citizen” as decreed in a decision from the 1997 North Carolina Supreme Court in the Leandro case. North Carolina has used the *More at Four* program to satisfy the court’s decree.

Governor Bev Perdue did not support the reduction in funding for the pre-K program and, on August 10, 2011, issued *Executive Order 100* that ordered state agen-

cies ensure that all at-risk children who applied to enroll in *More at Four* be allowed to do so. Additionally, the *Order* required that:

- Program standards be maintained.
- Learning standards be aligned with kindergarten.
- Financial supports to local classrooms be in place.
- Higher education develop articulation agreements.

Source: State of North Carolina, *Executive Order 100*, August 10, 2011, <http://www.governor.state.nc.us/library/newsletters/08.12.11.html>

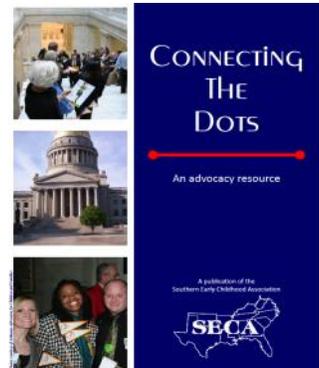
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#### NEW Advocacy Resource



### Kids Count 2011 Summary Now Available

The Annie E. Casey Foundation produces a statistical look at the well-being of children and families in our nation each year, and the SECA office prepares a summary of the report that compiles the statistics for the SECA region.

*Kids Count 2011: State Profiles of Child Well-Being, A*

*Summary of the SECA States* is now available on the SECA website at: <http://www.southerlychildhood.org/policy.php>.

This year’s summary includes new measures of child and family well-being that reflect the current economic conditions.

- Change in the median

income for households with children by race and ethnicity, 2007 & 2009.

- Percent of children with at least one unemployed parent in 2010.
- Children affected by foreclosure since 2007.

Summaries for 2008, 2009 and 2010 are also available.

[www.southerlychildhood.org/policy.php](http://www.southerlychildhood.org/policy.php)

## Connecticut First State to Adopt a “Paid Sick Days” Law

In January 2012, a new Connecticut law will require that service workers in businesses with 50 or more workers earn up to five paid sick days per year. This is the first law of its type in the United States and has garnered significant bipartisan support among voters in Connecticut.

The **National Partnership for Women and Families** released a Labor Day poll on September 1, 2011, that provided these findings:

- Republicans, Independents and Democrats alike share a favorable view of the new law.

- Women are particularly strong in their support of the new law—83% of women polled voiced their support.
- Despite heightened concerns about the economy, jobs and small businesses, voters overwhelmingly say that the law is essential to protecting workers and middle-class families who are vulnerable to losing income or losing their jobs because of illness or a child’s medical needs.

The website of the organization has resources for advocates who are interested in developing a campaign. The re-

sources include a **Back to School Toolkit** that is focused on starting the discussion about how families manage sick children if they have no paid sick days.

For a copy of the **Toolkit** and other resources, go to [http://www.nationalpartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=psd\\_index](http://www.nationalpartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=psd_index)



## Race to the Top: Eight SECA States Submitted Intent to Apply

The **Race to the Top: Early Learning Challenge** grant competition is underway, and eight SECA states submitted formal letters of intent to apply.

- Alabama
- Arkansas
- Georgia
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- Mississippi

- North Carolina
- West Virginia

*“Awards in Race to the Top will go to States that are leading the way with ambitious yet achievable plans for implementing coherent, compelling, and comprehensive early learning education reform.”*

Although the first guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Education stated that letters of intent had to be submitted, the last information available allows states that did not provide the letter to submit a grant proposal.

The application, budget spreadsheets and an Executive Summary are available at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/ractothetop-earlylearningchallenges/index.html>.

Good luck to the SECA States!

## Southern Issues: Has Anything Changed?

The Southern Early Childhood Association (formerly Southern Association on Children Under Six) was formed in 1949 to promote the health and well-being of the South’s children and families. During that time, we’ve said over and over again that we’re an organization devoted to “Southern issues.”

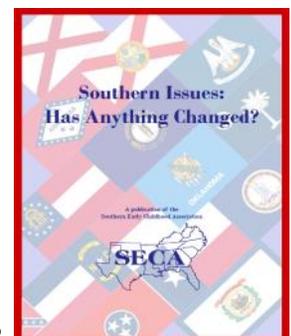
The SECA Board spent some time in July 2010 talking about what that really means. Does the South have issues that

are unique to the region or do we share many common concerns with the rest of the country? What makes this region “special”?

Our new publication attempts to define what being “southern” means and what issues still face our region. The document includes a discussion of where we started, where we are now, and what makes us different. We hope you’ll take the time to read through the publication

and think you’ll find some answers and surprises there! For a copy of the publication go to

[http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/upload/file/Public%20Policy%20Docs/Southern%20Issues%20\(final\)\(1\).pdf](http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/upload/file/Public%20Policy%20Docs/Southern%20Issues%20(final)(1).pdf)



# News from Washington: The American Jobs Act

On September 8, 2011, President Barack Obama addressed a joint session of Congress and introduced the **American Jobs Act**, a \$447 billion proposal from the White House to combat long term unemployment and jump start the economy.

The jobs package includes:

- **Employee Tax Cuts**—This would extend and expand the payroll tax cut for employees that was implemented in 2011. Employees would have more take home pay.
- **Employer Tax Cuts**—The employer portion of the payroll tax would be cut for all businesses with payrolls up to \$5 million. Current employer

payroll taxes are 6.2 %. The cut would lower that to 3.1%.

- **Public Works**—The President proposes spending \$30 billion to modernize schools and \$50 billion on road and bridge projects.
- **Unemployment Benefits**—The proposal would continue extended unemployment benefits.
- **Local Government Aid**—\$35 billion is proposed to avoid state government and teacher layoffs.
- **Employer Tax Credits**—A new tax credit of up to \$4,000 for employers who hire long-term unemployed workers is proposed.

- **Equipment Deduction**—Continue for one year a tax break for businesses that allows them to deduct the entire cost of new equipment in one year.

The President stated that this new spending would be offset by additional spending cuts and would not increase the federal deficit. On September 19, 2011, he plans to propose almost \$2 trillion in deficit reductions to the 12-member Congressional committee that is working on a deficit reduction plan. The committee met for the first time on September 8, 2011.

Source: *American Jobs Act: Get the Facts*, www.whitehouse.gov, September 8, 2011.

## Some SECA States Have Accredited Associate Degree Programs

In 2006, the NAEYC Commission on Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation implemented an accreditation system. This system awards accreditation to associate degree programs that demonstrate evidence of meeting the Professional Preparation Standards. Accreditation provides a framework for:

- Self study.
- External evaluation.
- Improvement in the quality of teacher preparation.

Since the program began in 2006, 127 programs in 25 states have earned accreditation from the Commission on Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation.

**Does your state have an accredited program?**

### Alabama

Jefferson State Community College

### Arkansas

Pulaski Technical College  
Southeast Arkansas College  
U of A Community College/Morrilton

### Kentucky

Henderson Community College

### North Carolina

Asheville-Buncombe Technical College  
Blue Ridge Community College  
Central Piedmont Community College  
Davidson County Community College  
Forsyth Technical Community College  
Gaston College  
Guilford Tech Community College

### Oklahoma

Connors State College  
Oklahoma City Community College  
Oklahoma State University/OK City  
Seminole State College  
Tulsa Community College  
Western Oklahoma State College

### South Carolina

Aiken Technical College  
Denmark Technical College  
Greenville Technical College

Horry-Georgetown Technical College  
Midlands Technical College  
Orangeburg-Calhoun Tech College  
Piedmont Technical College  
Spartanburg Community College  
Technical College of the Lowcountry  
TriCounty Technical College  
Williamsburg Technical College  
York Technical College

### Tennessee

Nashville State Community College

### Texas

Collin College  
Houston Community College  
San Antonio College

The SECA states of **Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Virginia** and **West Virginia** were not listed as having accredited programs. They may have colleges that are in the process of applying for accreditation.

For a complete list of programs and degrees offered, go to [http://www.naacy.org/ecada/ecada\\_programs](http://www.naacy.org/ecada/ecada_programs) List retrieved on September 9, 2011.

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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.

## News from the SECA States

### Florida

State budget cuts are beginning to impact **after-school programs** in the Miami-Dade school district. According to an article published in the Miami Herald on August 22, 2011, "Miami Dade County lost more than \$13 million in funding for its before-and-after school care programs. As a result, 7-and 8-year old children are no longer eligible for some state subsidized programs. Six-year-olds may also be forced out, according to Evelio Torres, president and CEO of the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade and Monroe counties." Source: [www.miamiherald.com](http://www.miamiherald.com), August 22, 2011.

### Kentucky

The Child Care Council of Kentucky has released the "**Kids Matter App**" that will allow parents to search for quality child care and access resources to help pay for child care through an

Android and iPhone app. Families will have access to a database of regulated child care facilities that is searchable, based on various criteria such as city, star rating, and age of child. Source: [www.earlychildhoodfocus.org](http://www.earlychildhoodfocus.org), retrieved August 29, 2011.

### Texas

The largest **teacher merit pay system** in the country lost 90% of its funding in the budget battles in Texas. This year, about 180,000 teachers will receive bonuses. Over the next two years, money will only be available for about 18,000 bonuses. The state is spending about \$392 million currently. In the next budget cycle, the state will spend \$40 million. Source: *News in Brief, Education Week, July 13, 2011, p. 4.*

Texas also made the news with a new **study of discipline records** of nearly

1 million state middle and high school students. According to the study, *Breaking Schools' Rules: A State-wide Study of How School Discipline Relates to Students' Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement* by the Council of State Governments Justice Center and the Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A & M University, researchers found that "at least half of the 1 million students were suspended or expelled at least once during the study period, the punishments were applied unevenly among students of different races, abilities and schools and that students disciplined with these methods were more likely to repeat a grade or drop out of school than students who were not punished in the same way." Source: *Education Week, August 10, 2011, page 9.*