

# Southern Early Childhood Association

## Public Policy Notes

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## Southern Schools Receive National Award for Fighting Childhood Obesity

The William J. Clinton Presidential Library was the site of a national recognition award ceremony in August 2008 for schools that have adopted healthier school practices for students. The Healthy Schools Program is a joint effort of the William J. Clinton Foundation and the American Heart Association. Of the 43 schools that were recognized, 14 of those schools were located in Southern states.

The Healthy Schools Program outlines specific steps that schools can take to create healthier environments. The criteria are based on the best evidence of programs and practices that can make a difference in lifestyle choices. To earn an award, schools must implement best practices in all of these areas: Policy/Systems; School Meals Programs; Competitive Foods and Beverages; Health Education; Physical Activity; School Employee Wellness; Physical Education; Before and After School Programs. Elementary schools that were recognized by former President Bill Clinton

included:

- Clair Mel/Tampa, FL
- Flagami / Miami, FL
- George W. Carver/ Miami, FL
- Kenly/ Tampa, FL
- McIver/ Halifax County, NC
- North Beach/ Miami, FL
- Pierson/ Pierson, FL
- Pittman/ Enfield, NC
- Scotland Neck Primary/ Scotland Neck, NC
- Silver Bluff/ Miami, FL

Also recognized were Felix Varela Senior High, Miami Edison Middle School and Miami Springs Middle School in Florida and Forrest City Junior High in Arkansas.

For more information about the Healthy Schools Program, including the Framework that outlines the criteria to participate, go to [www.healthiergeneration.org](http://www.healthiergeneration.org).

## Virginia Welcomes New State School Officer

Billy K. Cannady, Jr., the Superintendent of Instruction in Virginia, stepped down on September 30, 2008 to become the dean of the University of Virginia's school of continuing and professional studies. Patricia L. Wright who served as the chief deputy superintendent under Mr. Cannady assumes the position of Superintendent on October 1, 2008.

Mr. Cannady's resignation follows a na-

tional pattern of high turnover among top state school officers. Recruiters are finding a much reduced talent pool of people with the right mix of educational and political experience.

Gene Wilhoit, Director of the Council of Chief State School Officers (which represents the top education leaders in each state), will present the keynote for the Public Policy Luncheon at SECA 2009 in Myrtle Beach.

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### Special points of interest:

- Children & the Presidential campaigns
- Assessing children and programs
- What the candidates say about community service
- More money for early childhood teachers
- The status of women and children

# The Mississippi Presidential Debate and Children's Issues

The first of several scheduled 2008 Presidential debates was held Friday, September 26th, at the Ole Miss campus in Oxford, Mississippi. As a way to focus national attention on the issues affecting children and families, *Every Child Matters* held a youth "convention" and rally to welcome Senators McCain and Obama to Oxford.

The event was organized by *Every Child Matters in Mississippi* and over 1000 children and adults turned out for the event. The attendees pressed the candidates and the media to more directly address early childhood education, poverty, child abuse, after-school services, health care and imprisonment. The event produced a *Bill of Mississippi Children and Youth Concerns* that was presented to both candidates.



**Help put children and families first! Make sure you cast your vote in November.**

Activities also included a full-page ad in *The Oxford Eagle* addressed to the moderator of the debate, Jim Lehrer. The ad urged him to ask the candidates about their plans for addressing children's issues.

*Every Child Matters* is also organizing rallies at the other presidential and vice-presidential debate sites. They'll be in St. Louis on October 2; in Nashville on October 6 and 7; and Long Island, NY on October 14 and 15.

*Every Child Matters* is an organization devoted to making the needs of children and families a national priority.

For more information about the Mississippi event, visit [www.everychildmatters.org](http://www.everychildmatters.org).

Source: [www.everychildmatters.org](http://www.everychildmatters.org)

## National Research Council Issues Report on Assessment

How can we determine if early childhood programs are producing results and our investment in those programs is paying off? Congress asked the National Research Council to give them guidance on identifying important outcomes for children for children ages birth to age 5 and how best to assess them in preschools, child care and other early childhood programs.

The National Research Council issued a report in August 2008 that concluded that "well-planned assessments can inform teaching and efforts to improve programs and can contribute to better outcomes for children, but poor assessments

or misuse of the results can harm both children and programs. The report offers principles to guide the design, implementation, and use of assessments in early childhood settings. "

For more information on the report, *Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What and How?*, go to [www.nap.edu](http://www.nap.edu).

**"The assessment of young children's development and learning has recently taken on new importance."**

## Teaching is an Example of "Community Service"

The 2008 Presidential candidates, Senators McCain and Obama, have included the theme of community service in their campaigns. Both candidates commented in September that they would bolster community service if they won the White House, but they disagreed on how much of a role the federal government should play in supporting that community service.

Senator Obama's plan includes a program to help universities partner with school districts to provide stronger field experiences for prospective teachers who agree to serve in high-need schools. He has proposed a \$3.5 billion plan to

bolster community service efforts.

Senator McCain's community service plan calls for using AmeriCorps and SeniorCorps volunteers to help address the high drop-out rates in some high schools by serving as tutors and mentors. He has called Teach for America "probably one of the lead organizations in America today: "



Teaching & Community Service

Source: *Education Week*, September 17, 2008

# Higher Education Act Includes Early Childhood Provisions

The bipartisan Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 includes new provisions that will enhance the ability of early childhood educators to access support for postsecondary education and the development of comprehensive professional development systems.

The Act includes the following:

- Expanding student loan forgiveness programs to include teachers earning a Bachelor's degree who will work in licensed or regulated child care, Head Start, Early Head Start and state pre-kindergarten programs.
- The ability to use grant funds for compensation of early childhood educators who attain an Associate



or Baccalaureate degree.

- New grants to states to create early childhood education professional development and career systems that will address teacher competencies and credentials, compensation, quality and articulation agreements.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children was instrumental in developing these components of the bill and worked to ensure that they were incorporated into the reauthorization.

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

Source: National Association for the Education of Young Children, Press Release, July 31, 2008

## US Department of Education Creates Education Index

US Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings unveiled five indicators to track the progress of the nation's educational system at the Aspen Institute Summit on September 15, 2008. The indicators, *Achievement*, *Achievement Gap*, *High School Graduation*, *College Readiness* and *College Completion*, are designed to show educational performance over time to inform future debates on education reform.

The Indicators answer these questions:

- What percentage of 4th and 8th graders are proficient or above in reading and math?
- What percentage of black and Hispanic 4th and 8th graders are proficient or above in reading and math as

compared to the same cohort of white students?

- What is the percentage of public high school students who earn a regular diploma in four years?
- Of the high school students who take a college entrance exam, what percentage are ready for a college course?
- What percentage of our young labor force (25-34 years old) have at least a bachelor's degree?

**Although these indicators reference older children and adults, early childhood programs provide the foundation for later school success.**

## NWLC Issues *A Platform for Progress*

The National Women's Law Center recently issued a *Platform for Progress: Building a Better Future for Women and Their Families* that outlines steps that the federal government should take to address the unmet needs of women and their families. This *Platform* was developed as a document to be utilized as the new administration takes office in January 2009 and begins the process of putting forth the new administration's agenda and policy initiatives.

Highlights of the *Platform* include 1) Supporting Women in the Workplace, 2) Building Economic Security, 3) Improving

Women's Health, 4) Improving Women's Education, and 5) Guaranteeing Equal Rights.

The Center has been instrumental in the last few years, under the leadership of Helen Blank, of promoting the quality child care agenda and taking the lead in working to provide adequate funding for the nation's child care system.

Source: [www.nwlc.org](http://www.nwlc.org)



January 2009 marks a new administration and a new federal policy agenda.

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We're on the Web at  
[www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org](http://www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org)

## Public Policy Resources Available from SECA

- **Position Statements** on issues that are pertinent to the field of Early Childhood Education
- **Summaries** of reports and data for the SECA states

You'll find all of this on the SECA website at  
[www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org](http://www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org).

Check out the Public Policy and Position Statement pages. This information is not copyrighted and is available for your use. You'll also find links to the public policy pages of your state affiliate websites. Be an informed and prepared advocate for children!

## Create An Advocacy Calendar for Your State—This One's From Texas!

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS...**



 <p><b><u>JANUARY</u></b></p> <p>Looking ahead at what's to come... How can I support Pre-K in 2008 and prepare for 2009?</p>	 <p><b><u>FEBRUARY</u></b></p> <p>Interim Charges: Good news for Pre-K!</p>	 <p><b><u>MARCH</u></b></p> <p>Meeting with Legislators at Home: "It's All Local!"</p>
 <p><b><u>APRIL</u></b></p> <p>The Year of the Parent... Finding Your Parent Voice!</p>	 <p><b><u>MAY</u></b></p> <p>Working with State Agencies: The Buck Starts There</p>	 <p><b><u>JUNE</u></b></p> <p>School's Out! Educational Summer Camps, Activities, and Vacations</p>
 <p><b><u>JULY</u></b></p> <p>Focus on Texas School Boards</p>	 <p><b><u>AUGUST</u></b></p> <p>Voter Registration</p>	 <p><b><u>SEPTEMBER</u></b></p> <p>Candidate Talk: Making Pre-K an Election Issue</p>
 <p><b><u>OCTOBER</u></b></p> <p>GO VOTE!</p>	 <p><b><u>NOVEMBER</u></b></p> <p>Campaign Wrap-up</p>	 <p><b><u>DECEMBER</u></b></p> <p>Meet Your Legislator!</p>

**...PREPARE FOR PRE-K IN 2009!**