

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

A New Twist in Political Strategy

Politics is never dull and you learn something new every day. That's certainly the case with the current legislative fiscal session in **Arkansas** and a procedural move that was proposed to move an agenda forward. *A unique strategy has surfaced* as the Arkansas Legislature considers whether to re-finance the Medicaid expansion (in a new program) that came about originally with the Affordable Care Act.

Originally, Arkansas chose to establish its Medicaid expansion program with a few twists and garnered federal approval to give it a try. Essentially, the **Private Option** enrolled expansion eligible persons in a program that provided government-subsidized private health insurance. This expansion wasn't won without a lot of political back and forth and now it's time to renew. Opponents were concerned about the ultimate costs to the state as the federal share of expenses decreased over time and the state would begin picking up that portion of the costs. That hasn't changed.



Governor Asa Hutchinson has proposed a new form of the expansion program, **Arkansas**

Works. This program would modify the original expansion program to include participation criteria such as referral to work training for unemployed recipients. It will require another federal waiver, not a certainty at this point, to modify the program even if the Legislature authorizes the program.

The bill authorizing **Arkansas Works** passed earlier in the month and the Legislature began considering passage of the Medicaid appropriations bill to fund the program and there the process stopped because there were not enough "yes" votes to pass the measure. (In the Arkansas Legislature, a three-fourths majority is required to pass any appropriations bill. The vote requirement could not be met with the original bill.)

The strategy proposed was to pass the [Medicaid appropriations bill](#) with an amendment to sunset the program at the end of 2016. The Governor would then line item veto the sunset clause in the bill, effectively restoring funding

to the program. This strategy was proposed openly and the Governor vowed to initiate the line item veto.

(The amended bill passed the week of April 18th and the Governor issued the line-item veto on April 21st.

As an advocate, you've seen procedural maneuvers before, so what makes this process interesting?

It's the first time (at least in Arkansas) that **this procedural move has been utilized in such an open fashion.** Everyone knew that the amendment was just window dressing and the ultimate result would be to maintain the program. Proponents could tell constituents they got the bill passed: opponents could say they kept their pledge to defund the program.

Have we entered a new era of how to get things done? As we said, politics is never dull!

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Medicaid and the SECA States

If you'd like to read more about the original Medicaid expansion process and Arkansas's experience, [click here](#) to access the July 2012 and February 2014 issues of *Public Policy Notes*.

Click here to access a policy brief, [Medicaid in the SECA States](#), that provides a basic description of the program.

Remember, most health care programs for low-income children in our states have some relationship to Medicaid.

More Physical Activity, Better Academics?



The **LiiNK Project** is an initiative housed at Texas Christian University that is working with a group of schools to implement a research study based on the premise that children who are more physically active do better academically. **These school districts across Texas are bucking the trend of less recess and more focus on academics: they are adding in recess periods.**

According to the [LiiNK Project website](#), the project “is based on research in the U.S. and other countries to incorporate a much more inclusive model than traditional public schools have adopted over the past 20 years. Two private schools and two public school districts (four elementary schools) in the DFW area are participating in this project. LiiNK Project consists of four steps.

1. Increase the amount of physical activity/recess in the schools
2. Create equality across content areas; add ethics/character development as a content area
3. Assess students differently (assess with developmental tracking instead of grades twice a semester); less standardized testing – more local control
4. Restructure the school day (less hours in classroom for K-6 students; extra time in play/creativity)

Training takes place each spring for a new cohort of LiiNK project schools and the launch begins the following fall for each cohort.”

Their current “**playmates**” are:

[Trinity Valley School](#)
[Starpoint School](#)
[Eagle Mountain –Saginaw ISD](#)
[Irving ISD](#)
[Little Elm ISD](#)
[Chattanooga, OK Public School](#)
[White Settlement ISD](#)

“This plan has the potential to strengthen the public school system through better health (less obesity, less type II diabetes, increased energy), higher expectations of social responsibility (emphasizing ethical behaviors); more time to be playful and creative in order to learn more effectively when in the classroom; fewer standardized tests, which will develop more student confidence and self-esteem to learn, because a student will no longer be labeled by a score; and less time in a classroom setting (although no less rigor of content), which will create more passion in students to learn and less burnout as a result of too much time in school.”



Saving Native Languages

The U. S. Department of Education has launched a new grant initiative (CFDA Number: 84.365C) to “support the instruction and study of Native American languages, in an attempt to support the preservation of those languages and boost the education of Native youths.”

Administered by the [Native American and Alaska Native Children in School Program](#), the Department is making \$3.2 mil-

lion available in grants.

“ The purpose of the Native American and Alaska Native Children in School (NAM) program is to award grants to eligible entities to develop and enhance capacity to provide effective instruction and support to Native American students who are identified as English learners (ELs). The goal of this program is to support the teaching, learning and studying of Native American languages while also increasing the English language proficiency of students served to achieve the same challenging State academic content and

achievement standards for all students.

Projects may include teacher training, curriculum development, and evaluation and assessment to support the core program of student instruction and parent-community participation. **Student instruction may comprise preschool**, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels or combinations of these levels.”

For a copy of the grant application and more information, visit <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/naancs/applicant.html>.

News from the States



Oklahoma

Nearly 50 school districts in Oklahoma have filed suit with the Oklahoma Supreme Court to compel the Oklahoma Department of Education to calculate how much they were underpaid for nearly 22 years (1993-2004) as state aid to districts was miscalculated and to repay those funds to the districts.

The suit also asks that overpayments to districts be recovered and re-distributed. [Click here](#) to read a news article from Oklahoma's News9.com.



Virginia

Governor Terry McAuliffe vetoed a bill ([HB516](#)) on

April 4th that **"would require schools to identify materials as 'sexually explicit' and notify parents if teachers plan to provide instructional material containing such content. The legislation would also require teachers to provide alternative instructional materials if requested by a parent."**



Governor McAuliffe stated in his [veto statement](#), "Open

communication between parents and teachers is important, and school systems have an obligation to provide age-appropriate material for students. However, this legislation lacks flexibility and would require the label of "sexually explicit" to apply to an artistic work based on a single scene, without further context. Numerous educators, librarians, students, and others involved in the teaching process have expressed their concerns about the real-life consequences of this legislation's requirements.

We have long entrusted curriculum management to our local school boards. School boards are best positioned to ensure that our students are exposed to those appropriate literary and artistic works that will expand students' horizons and enrich their learning experiences. School boards are also most knowledgeable about those materials that will best position our students to succeed in Advanced Placement and other college preparatory programs."



Florida

In March, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released reports that looked into compliance in child care programs with state health and safety regula-

tions. "Federal inspectors found that Florida is not adequately enforcing its rules at child care facilities, discovering violations that exposed children to potential electrocution, poisoning and other injuries....Out of 227 facilities inspected in nine states and Puerto Rico, only nine had no health or safety violations, the department found." [Click here](#) to read the article, *Children Endangered by Florida's Failure to Enforce Rules at State's Child Care Centers*, from [www.allgov.com](#)

On a brighter note, [The Children's Campaign](#) of Florida announced successes during the 2016 legislative session that included making at least 1,000 additional children with or at risk of development disabilities eligible for Early Steps, assuring eligibility to KidCare for 13,400 lawfully residing immigrant children, and requiring that over 9,300 child care facilities meet enhanced health and safety standards. [Click here](#) to read more about the 2016 legislative priorities of the Campaign.

Watch for more state news during the next few months as state legislatures complete their 2016 sessions. We'll keep you updated on items of interest in your states.

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"A Voice for Southern Children"

How to Use Public Policy Notes

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.

This monthly newsletter is produced by Glenda Bean, SECA Executive Director.

SECA strives to provide non-partisan and non-biased information that is of interest to early childhood educators. Sign up at

<http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/public-policy/public-policy-notes/>

to receive notice of its availability each month.

Families and Work Institute Undergoing Transition

Many of you are familiar with the [Families and Work Institute](#), "a nonprofit research-to-action institute dedicated to providing research for living in today's changing workplace, changing family and changing community. Since the Institute was founded in 1989, our work has addressed issues in three major areas: the workforce/workplace, youth and early childhood."

You will also be familiar with Ellen Galinsky, President of FWI and author of *Mind in the Making*, "a cognitive neuroscience approach" to teaching young children. (Ellen was the

recipient of the 2014 SECA Friend of Children Award.)

According to a press release of April 15th, a transition will occur to strengthen and focus current workplace and early childhood efforts.

Mind in the Making has become a program of the Bezos Family Foundation (BFF).

The **workforce/workplace research** will continue through a partnership with the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM).

Both the Bezos Family Foundation and the Society for Human Resources Management have been long time partners with FWI.

FWI has partnered with the Bezos Family Foundation since 2011 on their initiative called [Vroom](#), an educational resource for parents and caregivers.

They have also partnered with SHRM since 2011 on [When Work Works](#), a resource dedicated to workplace research and informed policies.

Ellen will remain with the two initiatives in the position of Chief Science Officer and Executive Director of Mind in the Making at the Bezos Family Foundation and as Senior Advisor to SHRM Research.

