

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

Donald Trump Releases Child Care Plan



On September 13, 2016, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump released a child care plan. This plan incorporates the following components.

Income Tax Deduction

- ⇒ A rewrite of tax code to allow working parents to deduct from their income taxes child care expenses for up to four children and elderly dependent.
- ⇒ The deduction would be available to taxpayers who take the standard deduction as well as those who itemize.
- ⇒ The deduction would not be available to taxpayers earning more than \$250,000 (or \$500,000 if filing jointly).
- ⇒ The deduction will be capped at the average cost of care for the state of residence.
- ⇒ A child care spending rebate will be available to lower-income taxpayers through the existing Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

⇒ The deduction will be available to stay-at-home parents.

Dependent Care Savings Accounts (DCSA)

- ⇒ These would be a new type of accounts that allows families to set-aside money to offset child care or elder care costs.
- ⇒ The accounts would be available to everyone.
- ⇒ They would allow both tax-deductible contributions and tax-free appreciation year-to-year.
- ⇒ This account would be in addition to the currently available Dependent Care Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA).
- ⇒ Funds from the account could be applied to child care, after-school programs, and school tuition.
- ⇒ To assist lower-income parents who establish this account, the federal government would match up to \$500 of the first \$1,000 deposited each year.
- ⇒ For elderly services, the account can cover a variety of services, in-

cluding in-home nursing and long-term care.

Regulatory Reform

- ⇒ Reform to promote family-based and community-based solutions.
- ⇒ Create incentives for employers to develop worksite child care.

Paid Maternity Leave

- ⇒ Amend existing unemployment insurance to guarantee six weeks of paid maternity leave.
- ⇒ This benefit would apply only when employers do not offer paid maternity leave.
- ⇒ The costs of the new program would be “paid for by offsetting reductions in the program so that taxes are not raised.”

For a more comprehensive look at the plan and a series of responses to frequently asked questions, [click here](#).

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Take a Second Look!

Democratic presidential candidate, [Hillary Clinton](#), has a long history of support for early childhood education initiatives. Her campaign released a fact sheet that included support for universal preschool in 2015 and we have reported her proposals previously. [Click here](#) for Hillary's plan.

New Overtime Rules: The Impact on Early Education

The Department of Labor has issued final rules and regulations concerning overtime, including information on the potential impact on the non-profit sector.

As many of our early childhood programs fall under the non-profit banner, we thought it might be helpful to give you the basics and recommend that you determine what impact these new rules may have on your program.

Effective December 1, 2016 new regulations will take effect concern-

ing overtime pay and those entities that are affected include schools and preschools, regardless of their annual sales, business done or non-profit status.

The new rules raise the level of compensation that provides the executive, administrative and professional exemption to overtime pay. The final rules raises this threshold from \$455 a week (\$23,660) for a full-year worker to \$913 a week (\$47,476) for a full-year worker. This means that employees that earn less than \$47,476 a year will now be eligible

for overtime pay, regardless of whether they are salaried or hourly.

The Department of Labor has issued a document, [Overtime Final Rule and the Non-Profit Sector](#), that explains the new regulations, potential implications for non-profits and lists options for programs to consider to avoid the overtime issue.

We recommend that you contact your [local/regional DOL representatives](#) to get complete information on the impact for your program.

High Achievers: Are Our Accountability Systems Supporting Them?

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute recently released a report, [High Stakes for High Achievers: State Accountability in the Age of ESSA](#).

This report examined whether current or planned state accountability systems for elementary and middle schools supported high-achieving students and whether these systems provided schools with the incentive to focus on their high-achieving students.

Beginning with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and then its successor, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), accountability for student learning has been a cornerstone of both national and state educational reform.

These efforts have often been focused on students that needed support...low achieving students whose

achievement could be enhanced and supported.

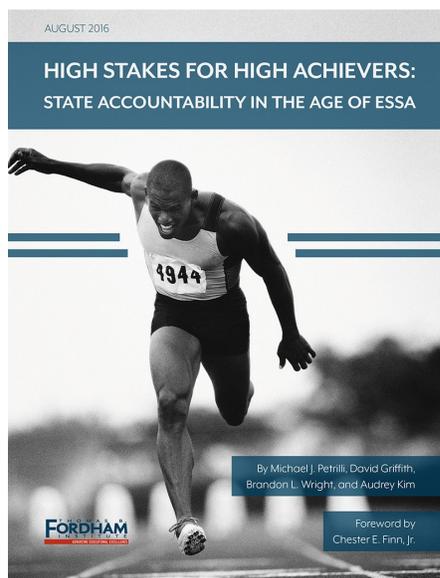
During the NCLB era, research demonstrated that students “just below the bar were most likely to make large gains...while high achievers made lesser improvements.

Those most victimized by this regime were high-achieving poor and minority students—kids who were dependent upon the school system to cultivate their potential and accelerate their achievement.”

According to the report, “the policy challenge going forward is to devise accountability systems that raise the ceiling as well as the floor. This is partly about fairness: It’s wrong for any child to miss out on academic challenges at school, and we should do everything we can to develop the full potential of all our students,

including high achievers.”

The report highlighted four states that can be considered leaders on this issue. We’re proud to report that two SECA states, **Arkansas** and **South Carolina**, are two of the four!



News from the States



Pre-K didn't make the Republican platform in Arkansas. A section of the platform that called for universal access to pre-K programs for 3- and 4-year olds and public funding for those in need of it was removed. The deletion occurred because of concerns that what is now a voluntary program might become a mandatory one, just like kindergarten. *Source: Just Say No to Poor Kids, AR Democrat/Gazette, 8/9/2016*



State Question 779 of 2016 is "an initiated constitutional amendment" that will appear on the

Oklahoma ballot in November. This amendment will create a limited purpose fund to improve education and levy a one cent sales and use tax to fund education. The revenue is anticipated to be utilized as follows: \$378 million: teacher raises/\$125 million: higher education/\$50 million: grants/\$50 million: early childhood/ \$20 million: vocational-technical education. *Source: Oklahoma One Percent Sales Tax, State Question 779 (2016), <https://ballotpedia.org/>*



In early August, a group of parents filed a complaint in Leon County **Florida** civil court to invalidate the decision that their children would

repeat third grade under Florida's promotion law because which relies on testing. The case was filed against the Florida Department of Education and seven school districts and was funded by the **Opt Out Florida Network**. (*These organizations have been formed by parents to protest the testing regimens and they request that their children "opt out" of the required tests.*) On August 26th, a circuit court judge ruled in favor of the parents. [Click here](#) to read the articles about the suit that appeared in the *Tampa Bay Times*.



The U.S. Department of Education announced on August 25, 2016 that it had reached an agreement with the

South Carolina Department of Education regarding financial support of special education and related services. The litigation involved the level of financial support for these education services and was the result of a reduction in federal aid to the state to support those services. (Under IDEA, a state must make available each year at least the same amount of funding as it did in the prior year.) In the settlement, the State of South Carolina agreed to appropriate additional state funds and the U.S. Department of Education has agreed not to reduce South Carolina's IDEA grant in any future year. To read a copy of the settlement agreement, [click here](#).



On August 31, 2016, the **Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB)** voted unanimously to adopt a plan to "unify all public schools under the governance of the democratically elected board by July 1, 2018." "Under the plan, all Orleans Parish public schools under the oversight of the Recovery School District (RSD) will transition to the oversight of OPSB. This plan allows the RSD charter schools to remain autonomous in making day-to-day decisions to best service students. The plan also begins the process of creating high standards that OPSB will use to hold charter schools accountable. The Unification Plan also empowers families with choice and ensures equity for all students." (The current governance and oversight system in New Orleans is a mix and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina when the Recovery School District was created to take over historically low performing schools.) To read a copy of the plan, [click here](#).



The Orleans Parish School Board adopts the unification plan. Retrieved from <http://opsb.us>

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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.

Inclusive Classrooms: A Downside for Children without Disabilities?

One of the major tenets of federal special education law is that children with disabilities should be educated within classrooms with peers that do not have disabilities. "to the maximum extent possible." Researchers have begun looking at data to determine whether children without disabilities are negatively impacted when they are educated in classrooms with **children with emotional and behavioral disabilities**.

The research has shown that young children who shared a classroom with children with these disabilities had "more absences, lower math and read-

ing scores in kindergarten and 1st grade and were more likely to act out in the classroom or struggle with social skills."

In 2009, researchers began to take a closer look at the "spillover effects", a term coined by Jason Fletcher. He found that these "effects were more 'robust and larger for reading' and had more of an impact on African-American and Hispanic nondisabled students in low-income schools."

Obviously, this is a controversial topic and will require more thorough research before effective practice guidance can be given. If you're interested in seeing the research behind these and subsequent findings,

you may find these papers of interest.

[Does the Presence of a Classmate with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities Link to Other Students' Absences in Kindergarten?](#) (Gottfried, Egalite, Kirksey/2016)

[Spillover Effects of Inclusion of Classmates with Emotional Problems on Test Scores in Early Elementary School](#) (Fletcher/2010)

[Classmates with Disabilities and Students' Noncognitive Outcomes](#) (Gottfried/2014)

Source: *Are Nondisabled Students Worse Off in Inclusive Classrooms*, Education Week, 9/07/2016