

# *The Education Report*

*A weekly report of public policy issues in American Education from*

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**May 10th, 2002**

## **IDEA Reauthorization Hearing**

On May 8, 2002 the Education Reform Subcommittee held a hearing to discuss the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which House Republicans hope to see passed this year. The hearing was attended by Chairman Michael Castle (R-DE), Ranking Minority Member Dale Kildee (D-MI), Tom Osborne (R-NE), Thomas Tancredo (R-CO), Todd Platts (R-PA) and Susan Davis (D-CA). The witnesses gave testimony on many different issues including the problems of school discipline, over referral, and the McKay Scholarship Program for Children with Disabilities.

Many Representatives, including Reps. Castle, Kildee and Osborne expressed particular concern regarding the use of discipline in schools, stating that expelling children and forcing them to the street is not going to help mend their misbehavior. The witnesses agreed that using suspension/expulsion as corrective punishment is not productive. In fact, as Dr. Russell Skiba, an Associate Professor from Indiana University, pointed out, there is no evidence that suspending/expelling disabled children from school has helped to curb their discipline problems. In many cases such action has only worsened the situation. Instead of focusing on discipline, as suggested by Dr. Sally Arthur, the Director of Educational Support Services of the Humble Independent School District in Texas, more needs to be done to focus on positive reinforcement for good behavior. The Humble Independent School District implemented such a strategy last year as an alternative to the standard Zero-tolerance policy; they have produced positive results.

School districts have the tendency to refer all of their problem children to special education classrooms. This has created an over supply of children to a situation already understaffed with teachers. However, this problem has a solution according to Dr. Richard Schoonover, the Director of Student Services at Bellevue Public Schools in Nebraska. Taking the time to individually assess each child before placing them in the special education classroom will help to identify a child's problem points to enable a responsible referral. "In many cases," said Dr. Schoonover, "we will find that the problems are not due to disability, at all." As Dr. Arthur pointed out, many times children are referred to

special education due to cultural differences. With individual assessment practices, schools may be able to eliminate misplaced referrals.

In perhaps the most touching moment of the hearing, Diane McCain, Director of the Choice Office for the Florida Department of Education, told the story of a middle school student admitted in the Florida public school system as Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH). The student could not read nor perform simple mathematical tasks. The student was constantly victim to verbal abuse from his teacher, finally provoking his mother to remove the student from the school. The student was brought into the McKay program, a program in Florida that provides parents of students with a disability another option for educating their child. Through the McKay Scholarships Program the student soon learned to read, add and subtract. Over \$40 million dollars has been provided by the Florida Department of Education for these scholarships to serve more than 8,000 students.

Testimony from this hearing can be viewed at:

[http://www.house.gov/ed\\_workforce/hearings/107th/edr/idea5802/wl5802.htm](http://www.house.gov/ed_workforce/hearings/107th/edr/idea5802/wl5802.htm).

### **Jeff Andrade Named Deputy Assistant Secretary for Office of Postsecondary Education**

The Department of Education announced that Jeffrey R. Andrade has been sworn in as deputy assistant secretary for the Office of Postsecondary Education. Serving as deputy assistant secretary, Jeff will be responsible for student aid issues. He will also oversee the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, which supports projects to reform and improve postsecondary education, and he will be responsible for the offices of accreditation and state liaison, and budget analysis and forecasting.

Mr. Andrade has had a strong background in the department as special assistant to the deputy secretary for higher education and student aid issues as well as an impressive public service career at the Education Department, which has spanned more than 11 years, from 1987 to 1998. While on detail from the department and subsequently as a professional staff member to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce (1997-98), Andrade worked on, among other issues, legislation to create the federal government's first performance-based organization, the department's office of Federal Student Assistance.

### **Patricia Hobbs named Director of Internal Communications for Education Department**

Patricia A. Hobbs has been named director of internal communications for the U.S. Department of Education. Hobbs will coordinate internal communications for

more than 4,700 employees across the Department's program offices at headquarters, as well as ten regional offices.

Ms. Hobbs is organizing monthly briefings with senior staff on the new ***No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*** and other special events for staff, such as a ***No Child Left Behind*** kick-off and jazz concert near headquarters. She also initiated a monthly opportunity for employees—*Lunch with the Secretary*—that brings staff together with the secretary to provide a forum for concerns and information on what they do.

Hobbs, a 20-year federal employee, worked on Capitol Hill and at the White House before coming to the Department of Education in 1985. She most recently chaired the national steering committee for the Improving America's Schools conferences, and has worked in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

### **Negotiated Rulemaking, Title I Public Comment Meetings**

All meetings will start at 9:00 a.m. local time with a morning briefing on Standards and Assessments. The official public comment period will begin at 1 p.m. and conclude at 5:15 p.m.

- **Monday, May 13, 2002**  
San Diego, California
- **Thursday, May 16, 2002**  
Little Rock, Arkansas
- **Thursday, May 30, 2002**  
New York City Area (East Elmhurst, New York)

To register for these meetings, please visit: [http://www.esilsg.org/Title\\_1/](http://www.esilsg.org/Title_1/)

### **President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education**

The 24-member President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education is holding a series of meetings that will culminate with a report recommending reforms for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The site for the first meeting was Houston, TX. The Commission held a March 20<sup>th</sup> meeting in San Diego and a March 21<sup>st</sup> meeting in Los Angeles. The remaining meeting will be held May 30-31 in Washington, DC.

**107th CONGRESS, 2nd SESSION**

**TENTATIVE SENATE CALENDAR 2002/ NON-LEGISLATIVE PERIODS**

**Tom Daschle**, Majority Leader

**May 27 - 31**

**Senate not in session**

**May 27**

*Memorial Day (observed)*

**June 3 (Mon.)**

**Senate reconvenes**

**July 1 - 5**

**Senate not in session**

**July 4**

*Independence Day*

**July 8 (Mon.)**

**Senate reconvenes**

**August 5 - September 2**

**Senate not in session (August Recess)**

**September 2**

*Labor Day*

**September 3 (Tues.)**

**Senate reconvenes**

**September 16 (Mon.)**

**Yom Kippur (NO VOTES)**

**October 4**

**Target adjournment**