

The Education Report

A weekly report of public policy issues in American Education from

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Department of Education Announces Website to Support President Bush's *No Child Left Behind* Act

Education Secretary Rod Paige and the Department of Education have created a website (www.NoChildLeftBehind.gov) to help provide information on the new education reform law to parents, families, teachers, local and state officials. The site will help in answering questions about the new law, as well as outline legislation in a simpler manner. In addition, an implementation kit is available online at: <http://edworkforce.house.gov> that was designed to bring constituents into the discussion about the new law.

Education Subcommittee Holds Hearings On Improving Special Education

Beginning yesterday, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce's Subcommittee on Education Reform began a series of hearings on improving the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The hearings focus on the reform and reauthorization of IDEA, which is the federal special education law that ensures that each student with disabilities receives high-quality education. The House Republicans hope to pass this reauthorization bill through Congress this year focusing on the following topics:

- **Funding.** Since taking charge of the House in 1995, Republicans have increased funding for IDEA by 226 percent to help states and local communities. As Republicans move toward full-funding of IDEA, members are asking a critical question: where does the money go? How have states and local communities used the significant funding increases provided for special education in recent years? Has all special education funding actually been used for special education? How will future increases be used en route to full funding?
- **Accountability and education quality.** Education quality requires accountability, and special education is no exception. As Education

Secretary Rod Paige told the committee last October: “While we have seen significant improvements in services to students with disabilities and their families, we have a long road to travel before we reach the goal of *No Child Left Behind*. Although about 6 of every 10 American students with disabilities graduate with a regular high school diploma, in some states the graduation rate is fewer than one in four. That rate defies the promise of the IDEA and it must be addressed. The data get worse when we disaggregate by race. Fewer than half of African-American children with disabilities leave school with diplomas.” The committee will examine how to improve educational results for special needs students.

- **Reducing the paperwork burden.** The most commonly heard complaint from teachers and school officials across the nation about IDEA is the paperwork burden it imposes, making it harder for teachers and school officials to do their jobs. What steps can Washington take to simplify the system for educators? Rep. Rick Keller (R-FL), a member of the Education Reform Subcommittee, plans to play a key role on the paperwork reduction issue.
- **Supporting special education teachers.** America is experiencing a growing shortage of quality special education teachers, many of whom are fed up with the daunting paperwork and time challenges associated with the current IDEA system. Rep. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) has introduced legislation, the CLASS Act, that would provide up to \$17,500 in student loan forgiveness for special education, math, or science teachers.
- **Overidentification/misidentification of minority youth.** As members of the Education & the Workforce Committee learned last year in a hearing on the issue, the current IDEA system is wrongly identifying some children for special education classes. As Secretary Rod Paige said last January of IDEA: “Children with disabilities are not completing school or performing at levels near their non-disabled peers. Our system fails to teach many children fundamental skills like reading, and then inappropriately identifies them as having disabilities. Our system identifies many children who have disabilities too late. And State data tell us that the proportion of minority students identified in some disability categories is dramatically greater than their share of the overall population. This is especially true of African American students in the categories of mentally-retarded and emotionally disturbed.”
- **Encouraging innovative approaches and parental involvement.** Several states have taken the lead in finding innovative approaches to improving special education and giving more options to parents with special-needs children. Florida, for example, last year launched a program that provides education choice for parents of disabled students. The McKay scholarships are available to parents who want to ensure that

their special needs children receive a quality education. According to *Education Week*, Florida education officials received more than 14,000 inquiries from interested parents in the first few months of the McKay program's existence. (Lisa Fine, August 8, 2001)

- **Discipline.** Are discipline provisions in IDEA sufficient to ensure every child in every school is educated in a safe environment, and every teacher can do what is needed to keep the classroom safe? In 2001, the House approved an amendment by Rep. Charlie Norwood (R-GA) that would allow special needs students to be disciplined under the same policy as non-special needs students in situations involving assault, weapons possession, and possession and use of illegal drugs.

The House panel is expected to complete hearings in July after the Presidential Commission on Excellence in Special Education prepares its final report and recommendations on IDEA reform. The 24-member commission will hold its last regional meeting in Washington DC from May 30-31. The site for the first meeting was Houston, TX and it held a March 20th meeting in San Diego and a March 21st meeting in Los Angeles.

Assistant Secretaries Testify Before House Subcommittee

On April 17th, the House Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee held a hearing entitled, "Foundations for Learning." Susan Neuman, Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education; Robert Pasternack, Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; Grover Whitehurst, Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement and Wade Horn, Assistant Secretary for Children and Families DHHS testified.

The Administration officials discussed President Bush's fiscal year 2003 budget in their respective areas. Much of the hearing focused on Head Start. Chairman Regula asked the panel did the children's program belong in the Department of Health and Human Services or was it better suited for the Department of Education. Regula stated that he always felt Head Start belonged within the Department of Education. Assistant Secretary Horn discussed the President's *Good Start, Grow Smart* Early Childhood Initiative, which aims to strengthen the early literacy component in Head Start and child care. As a part of this initiative, a national teacher training effort in early literacy is planned to begin this summer. Congressman Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) emphasized that the need for more literacy should not take place at the expense of a strong, continued focus on children's social and emotional development.

Vermont Governor Suggests His State Should Refuse Federal EI/Sec Funds

Vermont Gov. Howard Dean (D) suggested recently that perhaps his state should turn down nearly \$25 million in federal aid instead of trying to use it to implement the new provisions in the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Dean, who reportedly is considering a presidential campaign, suggested that the law is flawed and, for example, would require implementation of costly tests. Republicans bristled at the thought, noting that the governor would be turning down money meant for Vermont's poorest students rather than be held accountable for improving student achievement in its public schools.

Appropriations to Move in May

It appears that the Fiscal Year 2002 supplemental appropriations measure may be considered in early May, with appropriators turning to FY 2003 appropriations soon thereafter. House Republican leaders have been meeting to discuss the timing of consideration of the funding bills. However, even without a formal budget resolution (which appears unlikely because both the Republican-controlled House and Democrat-controlled Senate would have to agree to it), appropriators can begin making progress on funding bills on May 15th.

Rep. Joe Wilson Joins House Education Panel

Education & the Workforce Committee Chairman John Boehner (R-OH) announced yesterday that Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC) has joined the committee as a member. Wilson served on the South Carolina State Senate Education Committee for all 17 years of his service as a state senator. He was elected last December to fill the seat left vacant by the passing of former Rep. Floyd Spence (R-SC).

No Child Left Behind Tour Continues...

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige has reached out to parents and asked for their committed participation to improve America's schools through a 25-city tour across America. So far, Paige has visited Albuquerque, NM, Washington, DC and Atlanta, GA. Secretary Paige's most recent visit was to Las Vegas—it was the fourth stop on a 25-city **No Child Left Behind Tour Across America**.

America's Promise CEO Peter Gallagher, U.S. Treasurer Rosario Marín, and Jaime Escalante, distinguished educator from East Los Angeles, joined U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige on his **No Child Left Behind Tour Across America** to reach out to Las Vegas parents about the importance of this new law and to ask parents for their help in improving our local schools.

In addition, at a Las Vegas town-hall meeting sponsored by the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans,

Secretary Paige answered questions from families, educators and members of the community about how to ensure that every child is able to read at grade level by the third grade, and help improve student achievement across the country.

Proposal for Reading Comprehension Research

The Department of Education is requesting applications to carry out studies on how reading comprehension is taught and assessed. "What we want to do with this program is lay a scientific framework for teaching and learning methods by supporting research on reading comprehension that could improve students' academic achievement," said Grover "Russ" Whitehurst, U.S. assistant secretary for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

The notice for applications for this program was published in the April 10th *Federal Register*, and applications must be submitted by May 31st. The Department expects to make 10 awards, ranging from \$75,000 to \$500,000 for the first year. Grantees will have up to three years to conduct their research and up to \$4.5 million is available for the program this fiscal year.

To be considered, applicants must be: public or private organizations, institutions of higher education, state and local education agencies, and regional education laboratories. For additional details on this program please visit: <http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister>.

Title I Regulations Regional Meetings

There will be four Education Department regional hearings on Title I Regulations. The meetings will be held in; Cincinnati, OH, Atlanta, GA, San Diego, CA, and Little Rock, AR. The meetings will include public comment as well as presentations by policymakers and experts in standards and assessments. At each gathering, those who served as negotiators will talk about that process and the use of standards and assessments in various communities.

A list of negotiators is available at <http://www.ed.gov/PressReleases/02-2002/02272002.html>. The meetings will include discussions about standards, their quality and connecting them to instruction, and assessments, covering various types, alignment with standards, and inclusion of all children. Locations for the meetings (all run 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.) are as follows:

Monday, May 6th, 2002

The Holiday Cincinnati Airport
1717 Airport Exchange Blvd.
Erlanger, KY 41048
859-371-2233
Fax-859-371-5002

www.basshotels.com/hotels/cvgap

Tuesday May 7th, 2002

Sheraton Atlanta
165 Courtland Street
Atlanta, GA 30303
404-659-6500
Fax-404-523-9924
www.sheratonatlantahotel.com

Monday, May 13th, 2002

The Westgate Hotel
1055 Second Ave.
San Diego, CA 92101
619-238-1818
Fax-619-557-3737
www.westgatehotel.com

Thursday, May 16th, 2002

Double Tree Hotel
424 West Markham
Little Rock, AR
501-372-4371
Fax-501-372-0518
www.doubletree.com

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

