

# *The Education Report*

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

*Washington Partners, LLC*

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**December 20, 2002**

## **Executive Summary:**

1. Washington Update
2. What Works Clearinghouse Education Policy Forum
3. Perkins Programs Under Review by OVAE
4. Plans Revealed for New Program to Train Principals for Success
5. Study Says Special Education Programs Boost Math Scores

## **1. Washington Update**

The biggest story in Washington this week and on Capitol Hill has been the future of the embattled Senate Majority Leader, Trent Lott (R-MS). Lott bowed to the inevitable today by announcing he will not serve as majority leader in the upcoming Congress. Lott made clear, however, that he will remain in the Senate. The heir apparent is Senator Bill Frist of Tennessee, the only Senator who has officially declared his candidacy for the Senate Majority Leader position. Frist instantly gained backing from Sen. Nickles (R-OK), Sen. McConnell (R-KY) and Sen. Warner (R-VA). Sen. Santorum (R-PA) is rumored as a possible candidate, however, Frist is clearly the front runner and the preferred candidate of the White House.

Sen. Lott's resignation is official on January 6, the day the Republican Conference will meet to pick his successor. The turmoil surrounding Senator Lott has had a ripple effect throughout the Capitol fueling speculation -- which now appears untrue -- that he might resign from the Senate all together, possibly leaving a 50-50 party split. Rumors now abound that Lott may be offered a Committee chairmanship as a consolation prize for his resignation and for not leaving the Senate all together. What Committee that might be and how his appointment might affect other Committee positions is the latest topic of speculation. The Lott turmoil has pushed the Senate agenda back, postponing organizing decisions that were to be made before January 26<sup>th</sup>.

The Appropriations mark-up of the unfinished spending bills, once set for January 10<sup>th</sup>, is now likely to slip into the next week. We continue to hear that the President's

recommended spending level for FY 2003--\$15 billion below what the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress, under Democratic leadership had wanted to appropriate—will in fact be the target. The 11 bills necessary to fund those agencies of the government currently operating with a continuing resolution (last year's spending levels for everything) are being rewritten to reflect this significant reduction. The cut for the Department of Education will reach almost \$2 billion. Though details are not yet available, it will be impossible to cut that much spending from one agency and not feel the pinch.

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## **2. What Works Clearinghouse Education Policy Forum**

On December 13<sup>th</sup> the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) held an informational luncheon organized by the American Educational Research Association, the Institute for Education Leadership, and the Washington Evaluators. The forum highlighted the functions of the WWC and future plans.

The WWC is in the process of developing standards for reviewing and synthesizing educational research. Comments have been received on the draft standards released earlier this year and **final standards are expected to be released in January 2003** and will be accessible on their website, <http://www.w-w-c.org>. These standards will be used to determine a central, reliable and independent source of scientifically based educational research. Several searchable online databases are being developed to meet this need and are projected to be available in the spring of 2003.

Participation from interested parties is encouraged by the WWC. The group plans to develop a "What Works Network" that would link providers, consumers, and evaluators to facilitate dialogue and to solicit input on projected plans and activities.

## **3. Perkins Programs Under Review by OVAE**

In January, the Education Department's Office of Vocational and Adult Education will conduct three different monitoring projects in several states to examine how those states are handling the implementation of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act. These OVAE initiatives mark the second announced review of the Perkins Act in 2003, as the Education Department's Office of the Inspector General announced earlier this fall that a performance audit will be completed of several states to see how effectively those states are aligning Workforce Investment Act activities with Perkins activities.

The three monitoring strategies differ in scale and intensity, but all three will focus on how specific states collect and use accountability data, how they compile their accountability results, and how local plans are used to address state program improvement needs. Furthermore, OVAE officials will be looking to see how state-imposed Perkins standards align themselves with the new research-based, rigorous and effective curricular provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Advocates of vocational education warn that these reviews must be taken seriously, especially due to the recent leaked information from OMB of an effort to de-fund Perkins

in FY 2004 to fill a Pell Grant shortfall. With the reauthorization of this legislation pending in the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, this new scrutiny has not gone unnoticed. By mid-February, the House Education and the Workforce Committee will begin oversight on several titles of the Workforce Investment Act, including both Adult Literacy and Vocational Rehabilitation. A schedule for the Perkins Act has not been announced. Though members of the House and Senate are well aware of the support this program enjoys in the Capitol and elsewhere, the Administration appears uninformed. With criticism and support coming from both ends of the political spectrum, it appears likely the Congress will hold off on reauthorizing this legislation for a bit, and when they do take it up, will pursue a status quo rather than a reform minded agenda.

#### **4. Plans Revealed for New Program to Train Principals for Success**

The National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) has announced the launch of a new program to effectively train school principals to succeed in this new age of standards-based reform. The new initiative by the organization, dubbed the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL), plans to hold pilot workshops in March where NISL will rely on a “train-the-trainers” model for the professional development sessions. The focus will be on developing leadership and instructional skills that will prove highly effective in standards-driven schools. This approach is vastly different from traditional forms of professional development for administrative officials, who in the past have had to sign up for university courses on their own to fulfill professional development standards. The new NISL curriculum is a combination of Web-based learning and face-to-face workshops, both of which are designed to be intensive. While the participating principals will not leave the workshop sessions as new experts in every academic subject, they will become better able to judge what curricula, textbooks and teaching methods should be the most effective in their schools.

Individual school districts have begun contracting with NISL, and those school districts will identify “leadership teams” of noted principals, outstanding administrators and teacher educators to participate in the training workshops. These teams then go back to their home districts and conduct their own workshops for other principals and administrators in the district.

For more information, go to the NCEE website at <http://www.ncee.org> .-

#### **5. Study Says Special Education Programs Boost Math Scores**

According to a paper published in the November issue of the *Review of Economics and Statistics*, special education programs on average significantly improve the math skills of those students enrolled in special education classes. In addition, no evidence was found that said the practice of mainstreaming students with disabilities adversely affects other students in the class.

The paper is titled, “Inferring Program Effects for Specialized Populations: Does Special Education Raise Achievement for Students with Disabilities?” and it can be accessed at:

<http://edpro.stanford.edu/eah/articles.htm> .