

ED REVIEW

February 19, 2010

...a bi-weekly update on U.S. Department of Education activities relevant to the Intergovernmental and Corporate community and other stakeholders

TO SUPERINTENDENTS

In a wide-ranging speech to superintendents at the American Association of School Administrators' National Conference on Education, Secretary Duncan addressed reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), the Administration's recent budget proposal, and rethinking policies that are not serving the best interests of students and teachers in the classroom. "An opportunity like this -- the chance to make far-reaching changes to boost student achievement and truly get students college- and career-ready -- may not come along again in our lifetime," he noted. "What [we] do...over the next several years could have an impact on education for decades to come." Below are some key excerpts:

"I am optimistic that the three principles I have outlined for ESEA reauthorization -- higher standards, rewarding excellence, and a smarter, less prescriptive federal role -- have widespread support among both Democrats and Republicans. We very much look forward to working on ESEA reauthorization in a bipartisan manner. Education must be [an] issue when we put politics and ideology to the side and simply do what is best for children."

"Now, most [federal] money will stay in formula programs under the budget. Title I and IDEA are untouched.... But it is also true we are shifting toward more competitive grants in some areas. However, we are going to administer competitions in ways that ensure a level playing field for rural districts.... In some programs, we will be looking at set-asides for rural areas and providing technical assistance to ensure small districts can successfully compete. Geographic location should not dictate results."

"It takes courage to do the right thing for children, even in the face of attacks from stakeholders and the media. I'm not talking about foolhardy courage, about getting carried out on your shield. But, I don't agree that superintendents are trapped today, without good options or the ability to exercise independence. A superintendent who leads also finds ways to successfully consult and collaborate to bring out the best in others in support of students. That includes working with teachers and unions to revisit provisions of code and collective bargaining agreements in ways that are fair to teachers and better serve the interests of children."

"Let us always remember our True North," the Secretary concluded, "the answer to why we signed up for the superintendent's job: to change our students' lives for the better." FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www2.ed.gov/news/speeches/2010/02/02122010.html>.

Also, yesterday (February 18), Democratic and Republican leaders of the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Education and Labor announced plans for a bipartisan reform of ESEA. "It will start with a series of hearings in the coming weeks to explore the challenges and opportunities ahead as we work to ensure an excellent education is available to every student in America," the leadership declared, adding that "With a real commitment to innovation, we invite all stakeholders who share our serious interest in building a world-class education system to email us their suggestions." The committee's first hearing, focused on charter schools, will be held February 24. Stakeholders can send their input and suggestions on reauthorization to the committee at ESEAcomments@mail.house.gov. The deadline for comments is March 26. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://edlabor.house.gov/newsroom/2010/02/lawmakers-announce-plan-for-a.shtml>.

LET'S MOVE

On February 10, First Lady Michelle Obama announced a national goal of solving the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation so that children born today will reach adulthood at a healthy weight and unveiled a nationwide campaign -- Let's Move -- to help achieve it. "The physical and emotional health of an entire generation and the economic health and security of our nation is at stake," she said. "This isn't the kind of problem that can be solved overnight, but, with everyone working together, it can be solved. So, let's move." Let's Move will combat the epidemic through a comprehensive approach that builds on effective strategies and mobilizes public and private sector resources, providing schools, families, and communities with simple tools to help children be more active, eat better, and get healthy. Moreover, to support the campaign and coordinate partnerships with states, communities, and both the for- and non-profit sectors, the nation's leading children's health foundations have created an independent foundation -- the Partnership for a Healthier America -- which will accelerate existing efforts and facilitate new commitments targeting childhood obesity. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.letsmove.gov/>.

The challenge is great. Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in the U.S. have tripled, and, today, one in three children in America are overweight or obese. One-third of all children born in 2000 or later will suffer from diabetes at some point in their lives. Many others will face chronic obesity-related health problems, like heart disease, high blood pressure, and cancer. A recent study put the health care costs of obesity-related diseases at \$147 billion per year. This epidemic also impacts the nation's security, as obesity is now one of the most common disqualifiers for military service.

President Obama kicked off the Lets Move campaign by signing a Presidential Memorandum creating the first-ever Task Force on Childhood Obesity, including the Department of Education. Within 90 days, the task force will conduct a review of every federal policy and program relating to child nutrition and physical activity and develop an action plan that maximizes federal resources and sets benchmarks toward the First Lady's national goal. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/presidential-memorandum-establishing-a-task-force-childhood-obesity>.

CHILD NUTRITION

In a related issue, Secretary Duncan joined Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack on a conference call to discuss reauthorization of the *Child Nutrition Act*. This law sets nutrition standards for what children eat at school. Outlining the Administration's plans, Secretary Vilsack stated the goals are two-fold: to improve access to free or reduced-price meals and to boost their nutritional value. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <https://secure.prairiesys.com/webdata/weba1/wavefile/1960012625.mp3>.

ENGLISH LEARNERS

Earlier this month, following a video message from the Secretary, Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education Thelma Melendez spoke to some 2,300 members of the National Association for Bilingual Education. In her remarks, speaking as a former English learner, she explained why the success of this diverse and fast-growing student group is vital to this nation's prosperity. She also noted that roughly one in 10 students in the U.S. are English learners, that 78% of English learners are born in the U.S., and that these English learners speak more than 400 languages. The Administration's FY 2011 budget requests \$800 million for English Language Learner programs. These funds aim to increase students' English language proficiency, as well as encourage student bi-literacy. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www2.ed.gov/news/speeches/2010/02/02032010.html>.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The deadlines for several grant competitions are fast approaching:

- Arts in Education Model Development and Dissemination Program (closes 3/16). This program supports the enhancement, expansion, documentation, evaluation, and dissemination of innovative, cohesive models. These models must demonstrate effectiveness in: integrating into and strengthening arts in the core elementary and middle school curricula; strengthening arts instruction in those grades; and improving students' academic performance, including their skills in creating, performing, and responding to the arts. Estimated awards: 28. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/artsedmodel/>.
- Teaching American History Grant Program (closes 3/22). This program supports projects that aim to raise student achievement by improving teachers' knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of traditional American history. Awards assist districts, in partnership with entities that have extensive content expertise (colleges and universities, history and humanities organizations, and libraries and museums) to develop, implement, document, evaluate, and disseminate innovative, cohesive models of

professional development. Estimated awards: 120-125. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/teachinghistory/>.

- School Leadership Grant Program (closes 4/6). This program supports the development, enhancement, or expansion of innovative programs to recruit, train, and mentor principals (including assistant principals) for high-need districts. A high-need district is one that (1) either serves at least 10,000 children from low-income families or serves a community in which at least 20% of children are from low-income families and (2) has a high percentage of teachers teaching either outside of their certification or with emergency, provisional, or temporary certification. Estimated awards: 15-20. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/leadership/>.

Also, be sure to review the Department's Fiscal Year 2010 Grants Forecast (as of January 29), which lists virtually all programs and competitions under which the agency has invited or expects to invite applications for awards and provides actual or estimated dates for the transmittal of applications under these programs. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/find/edlite-forecast.html>. (Note: This document is advisory only and not an official application notice of the Department of Education.)

ODDS AND ENDS

- On February 17, marking the one-year anniversary of the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* (ARRA), Secretary Duncan highlighted the ARRA's positive impact at Riverside Elementary School in Alexandria, Virginia. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www2.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2010/02/02172010.html>. (Note: The full ARRA report is available at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/spending/impact2.html>.)
- According to the College Board's sixth annual "Advanced Placement Report to the Nation," 15.9% of the Class of 2009 achieved mastery (at least a 3 on a 5-point scale) on one or more AP exams -- up from 12.7% in 2004 and 15.2% in 2008. Yet, while eight states have more than 20% of their students graduate from high school having earned an AP exam grade of 3 or higher, 15 states have less than 10%. Also, though 15 states have successfully closed the equity and excellence gap for Hispanic students, only two states have closed the gap for African-American students, and no state with significant numbers of American Indian students have closed the gap. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO http://www.collegeboard.com/about/news_info/ap/2010/.
- As part of developing the Fiscal Year 2011 budget, the Department has identified a limited number of high-priority performance goals that will be a particular focus over the next two years. These goals, which will help measure the success of the Department's cradle-to-career education strategy, reflect the importance of teaching and learning, at all levels of the system. These goals are consistent with the agency's five-year strategic plan that is under development and will be used to monitor and report progress. FOR

MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/goals.html>.

QUOTE TO NOTE

“For all the uniqueness of rural and small town districts, they share a lot of the challenges of urban districts. Surveys suggest that rural high school students are more likely to use cocaine and meth and abuse alcohol than their urban peers. Teen birthrates are higher in rural areas than urban ones. More than one-fifth of the nation’s poorest-performing high schools, the so-called dropout factories, are located within rural regions. In short, today’s rural schools are not the pastoral institutions of a simpler yesteryear that many Americans imagine. We’re going to be making new resources available to superintendents to turn those troubling youth indicators around and support your role in improving teaching and learning within every district.”

-- Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2/12/10), addressing school superintendents

UPCOMING EVENTS

Now through April 8, the Department’s Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) is hosting a series of Regional Direct Loan Training Conferences. The free, one-day workshops will provide financial aid professionals at domestic schools with the essential skills necessary to administer the Direct Loan program at their institutions. Due to capacity limits at each location, attendees must pre-register online. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.fsaconferences.ed.gov/conferences/regional/>.

On March 3, the What Works Clearinghouse will host a webinar concerning the recommendations of its “Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom” practice guide. During the webinar, authors of the guide will discuss how educators can develop and implement effective strategies that promote positive student behavior. Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions of the authors. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>.

Teachers have until March 14 to sign-up for the National Financial Capability Challenge, an effort to help high school students develop the knowledge and skills needed to take real control of their financial futures. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2010/02/financial-capability-challenge-update/>.

Nominations are being accepted for the 2010 Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education. This year’s award will recognize individuals who have mastered the art of “scaling up” successful education strategies, resulting in a growth and expansion of student achievement, at three levels: elementary, secondary, and postsecondary. The deadline for nominations (which can be completed online) is March 19. Winners are honored at a dinner in New

York City and receive \$25,000. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO
<http://www.mcgraw-hill.com/prize/>.

March 6-8, the Department will exhibit at the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's Annual Conference in San Antonio. If you are attending this event, please stop by the agency's booth.

Please feel free to contact the Office of Communications and Outreach with any questions:
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