

# EDUCATION DAILY

The education community's independent daily news service

## Capitol Hill watch

### House members seek ways to target education funds

By Patti Mohr

Staff Writer

A day after the **Senate** completed work on legislation to fund federal education programs through the remainder of FY 2007, a **House** subcommittee examined national education trends to begin establishing its spending priorities for FY 2008.

Rep. **David Obey**, D-Wisc., chairman of the **House Appropriations Committee** and the **House Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education**, kicked off the subcommittee's first hearing of the year, saying members' primary purpose is to "address inequities."

*Congress completes FY 2007 budget, see p. 3  
Bills could save Medicaid reimbursements, see p. 3*

Witness after witness argued that **Congress** should direct federal dollars to low-income students. Although poverty is not a new topic for Hill lawmakers, the issue has gained traction as a high priority for several Democratic-led House committees.

The main question was how to allocate resources in a way that will produce the most effective results.

"Given the federal government's relatively limited investment in education," **Kati Haycock**, president of **Education Trust**, advised lawmakers to leverage funds to force states to distribute them to disadvantaged populations. She also suggested evaluating the effectiveness of each program — particularly NCLB's Title II teacher training grants.

#### Similar goal, multiple methods

Even though the hearing maintained a common theme of addressing academic and economic inequities, witnesses proposed wide-ranging solutions. Their endorsements ranged from early education, to GEAR Up and TRIO college-prep programs, summer learning programs, math and science training for teachers, a differentiated-pay Teacher Incentive Fund and Reading First.

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## Evolution debate hints at deeper science ed problems

By Sarah Sparks

Staff Writer

Kansas science standards are back in line with the scientific understanding of natural selection, but experts worry the continuing political tug-of-war over evolution in several states points to a deeper lack of understanding, in schools and the public at large, of how science works.

This week the state school board reversed its position for the fifth time in eight years, removing language that questioned evolution and allowing supernatural explanations for natural phenomena. While Kansas's seesawing science standards, along with legal battles in Georgia and Pennsylvania, have gotten the most attention, more than a dozen states have faced similar debates in recent years — from lawsuits to state legislative attempts to incorporate supernatural explanations or critiques into science classrooms.

"The greatest problem with scientific literacy is not misunderstanding a specific scientific concept,"

(See **EVOLUTION** on page 2)

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# NAEYC offers early childhood ed recommendations

By Steve Berlin

Staff Writer

The future of the nation's schools and economy begin with improving early childhood education, according to the **National Association for the Education of Young Children**, which this week released a series of recommendations designed to help **Congress** accomplish that end.

NAEYC President **Anne Mitchell** said the federal government needs to be more involved in developing a widely accessible, high-quality system that eases students' transition from pre-K programs into elementary school. That would entail, among other recommendations, targeted changes to Head Start, the No Child Left Behind and the Higher Education acts, and spending increases.

"America is a long way from ensuring every child has access to high quality early childhood education," she said. "With the proper resources, all [early childhood] programs can deliver a high-quality education. Some of our best solutions when we are in fiscal difficulty are to make the best investments."

The long-term payoff for investing in early-childhood education, which to NAEYC means programs for children from birth through age eight, appears as children advance educationally, she said. That investment, she added, enhances

the nation's global competitiveness as children emerge from school better-prepared.

**Adele Robinson**, NAEYC associate executive director of Public Policy, said the federal investment has been lacking during the **Bush administration**, and that an additional \$750 million would just compensate for unfunded cost of living increases and across-the-board budget cuts in Head Start alone.

The recommendations cover four general themes:

- A high-quality workforce and career system.
- A continuum of positive development and learning.
- A systems collaboration to support young children and families.
- An expansion of access to high-quality programs.

The career system is tied to early childhood via teacher training programs; retention and recruitment can be improved with grants, scholarships and standardized credential systems through changes made to the Higher Education Act.

The group also suggests that the reauthorized NCLB include aligned standards and curricula to create scaffolded learning for children, building upon previously attained knowledge as they advance.

For more information, go to [www.naeyc.org/policy/federal/pdf/CALLtoACTION107Combo.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/policy/federal/pdf/CALLtoACTION107Combo.pdf).

## EVOLUTION (continued from page 1)

said **Joseph McInerney**, former director of the **Biological Sciences Curriculum Study** in Colorado. "The essential problem here is the failure of the public to understand the nature of science, and the failure of the science community to teach it."

McInerney participated in a Washington, D.C., panel discussion on evolution with science teachers this week, where several teachers voiced concern about using the word "evolution" in their classrooms, preferring to use a "back door approach" to presenting the concepts.

"I can understand teachers' hesitance to use the word evolution, but I think it's a mistake," said **Linda Frouschauer**, president of the **National Science Teachers Association**. As the deadline nears for mandatory science assessments under the No Child Left Behind Act, she argued educators and administrators must confront the

issue directly to ensure students understand not just evolution, but scientific inquiry and evidence.

For example, those in intelligent design debates often mistakenly equate the common usage of "theory" — meaning an educated guess — with the scientific term of art used to mean a comprehensive explanation backed by extensive data.

"We wouldn't question the theory of gravity ... we wouldn't even consider calling that just a guess, but people very conveniently apply that to evolution and say, "Oh, it's just a guess," Frouschauer said. "Public schools have an obligation to their students to teach good scientific principles and not religious ideas."

That means, experts argue, science teachers must incorporate the scientific method and inquiry into every lesson, whether the content deals with evolution or chemistry.

For curriculum information on evolution, see <http://evolution.berkeley.edu/>.



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# Lawmakers vow to preserve Medicaid reimbursements

By Patti Mohr

Staff Writer

For the second year in a row, **Congress** and **President Bush** are at odds over how to clarify conflicting regulations governing school districts' administrative and transportation costs of providing health services to students with special needs.

Districts could lose as much as \$3.6 billion over five years (\$9 billion over 10 years) if the **Bush administration** has its way. In his FY 2008 budget, Bush announced plans to amend regulations to phase-out **Medicaid** payments to districts for certain school-based health services costs.

The proposal is part of a larger set of administrative changes meant to streamline Medicaid reimbursements and reduce annual increases in the program's spending. It would also resolve inconsistencies in the law for assigning financial responsibility for school-based services.

The proposal, however, has drawn intense criticism at every level of the education community arguing that Bush's plan would effectively deny disabled students the opportunity to regularly attend school.

In two separate acts proposed this week, Hill lawmakers fought back.

First, Sens. **Edward Kennedy**, D-Mass., and **Gordon Smith**, R-Ore., and Reps. **John Dingell**, D-Mich., **George Miller**, D-Calif., and **Ed Whitfield**, R-Ky., reintroduced legislation they proposed last year to preempt regulatory changes the administration might take to cut off Medicaid reimbursements.

"Many schools across this country are trying desperately to help these special needs children and we should be doing the same," Dingell said.

S. 578 and H.R. 1017, the Protecting Children's Health in Schools Act would amend the Social Security Act to clarify areas in the law that have had the effect of labeling school district claims as erroneous or fraudulent.

The legislation also includes accountability measures, such as a requirement for paying market-based rates.

Sponsors said the intent of the bill is to maintain and protect current use of the Medicaid reimbursements. "This vital Medicaid program helps ensure underprivileged children's health-care needs are met; and allows them to continue with their education," Whitfield said.

The legislation has strong support in both chambers.

Later in the week, Smith introduced a separate bill with Sen. **Chris Dodd**, D-Conn., to authorize \$50 million worth of grants for school-based health centers. According to Smith, S. 600 would provide the first federal means of support for the centers and would help some of the 9 million children lacking health insurance gain access to primary, preventive and mental health services.

Advocates for the legislation said it would provide the first federal subsidy for school-based health centers.

"After thirty years of providing unprecedented access to medical, counseling and preventive services for children and teens marginalized by mainstream health systems, school-based health centers are getting appropriate recognition of their worth from the federal government," said **John Schlitt**, executive director of the **National Assembly on School-Based Health Care**.

## Congress completes FY 2007 budget

At long last, Hill lawmakers finished their work on the nine appropriations bills left over by the previous **Congress**. The **Senate** voted 81-15 Wednesday night to send a joint resolution funding the government through Sept. 30 to the **White House** for **President Bush's** signature.

H. J. Res. 20, will provide \$57.5 billion to the **Education Department** to fund discretionary programs. The \$1.5 billion increase in education funding above FY 2006 levels would provide more support to targeted Title I grants, a new School Improvement fund, and Pell grant awards. It will also extend the E-Rate program's exemption from the Antideficiency Act through Dec. 31.

## FUNDS (continued from page 1)

The discussion, however, focused on Title I grants for disadvantaged communities.

Haycock suggested lawmakers rewrite the Title I funding formula to address inequities at every level.

"It is based on a sort of fiction," Haycock said, arguing that Title I provides an unbalanced distribution of dollars among and within districts. "Your formula rewards states that spend a lot on education."

### Subcommittee limitations

Though Thursday's hearing generated a lively discussion about the nation's education pri-

orities, Obey said the subcommittee's influence on the budget process is limited.

Despite the "interesting and useful suggestions," Obey said, "we do confront a reality."

For one, the subcommittee members are not empowered to rewrite programs unless they also sit on the **House Education and Labor Committee**.

"We do not design these programs. We simply fund them," Obey said. Furthermore, he said, funding choices are more restricted given a budget that supports tax cuts and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. "By process of elimination, the domestic portion of the budget gets creamed.... There ain't going to be no money for nothing."

## Daily Briefing

### Across the Nation

#### Michigan

##### SES providers must show effectiveness

Providers of supplemental educational services in Michigan will soon have to demonstrate how effective they are in raising student achievement, the *Detroit News* reported.

The **Michigan State Board of Education** voted Tuesday to approve changes to its required No Child Left Behind tutoring systems to help address low participation rates. According to **Michigan Department of Education** spokesman **Martin Ackley**, the state will look at each provider's program sustainability, school and parent satisfaction, and student achievement. It also will require providers to use research-based services and align tutoring to state academic achievement standards.

Under NCLB, all states must evaluate SES providers' effectiveness, but many states have struggled with how to measure it.

In 2005-2006, over 100,000 Michigan students were eligible for SES but only about 12,500 participated, the paper reported.

#### Newsmakers

##### Group to focus on leadership best practices

The **Institute for Educational Leadership** has assembled The MetLife Task Force on Teacher Leadership, an initiative funded by the **MetLife Foundation**.

The task force will act as a best-practices clearinghouse, identifying schools and districts where administrators support and expect teacher leadership, and where teachers put it into practice. The group is scheduled to release a report and best-practice briefs at the end of 2007.

Members are:

- **Joseph Aquerrebere, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.**
- **Jacqueline Ancess, Columbia University.**
- **Josephine Baker, District of Columbia Public Charter School Board.**
- **Barnett Berry, Center for Teacher Quality.**
- **Tom Carroll, National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.**
- **Antonia Cortese, American Federation of Teachers.**
- **Terry Dozier, Virginia Commonwealth University.**
- **Carol Edwards, The NEA Foundation.**
- **Nancy Flanagan, doctoral candidate, Michigan State University.**
- **Dick Flanary, National Association of Secondary School Principals.**
- **Mary Hatwood-Futrell, George Washington University.**
- **Erica Litke, East Side Community High School, New York.**
- **Mel Riddile, T.C. Williams High School, Alexandria, Va.**
- **Kervin Smith, Bell Multicultural High School, Washington, D.C.**

- **Steve Strull, National School Reform Faculty.**
- **Douglas Wood, Columbia University.**

##### COO to develop Edutopia communications

The **George Lucas Educational Foundation** has filled its chief operating officer position, Executive Director **Milton Chen** announced recently.

**Cindy Johanson** will become the organization's first-ever COO, a role she will take on after serving as senior vice president for interactive and education at the **Public Broadcasting Service**.

In her new job, Johanson will supervise the day-to-day operations of GLEF, on both an executive and editorial level. She will be charged with advancing an integrated media strategy, working with the organization's *Edutopia* magazine, documentaries, Web site and e-newsletters.

At PBS, Johanson led the expansion of the company's Web site and comprehensive Internet services. Before that, she was the co-founder of the **National Teacher Training Institute**, a television and online program for math and science teachers.

Johanson holds a bachelor's degree from **Ohio University** and a master's degree from Teachers College at **Columbia University**.

##### Alliance names a new policy director

**Jamie Fasteau**, formerly a legislative assistant for Sen. **Patty Murray**, D-Wash., was named director of Policy Development for the **Alliance for Excellent Education**.

As a legislative assistant, Fasteau worked on education, and children and families issues. In her new job, she is to "build a movement" for high school redesign that would help increase graduation rates and student achievement, according to an Alliance statement.

She will also lead the organizations policy work on adolescent literacy and building accurate data systems.

#### Study Hall

##### Organizations' policy positions show themes

The **National High School Alliance** has released a policy brief that condenses alliance members' positions on federal policies like the No Child Left Behind Act and other education-related legislation.

The brief, *Federal Policy Positions of National High School Alliance Partners*, highlights the common themes among the different organizations' policy statements.

Commonalities include:

- Ensuring high-quality and empowered educators in every classroom.
- Providing flexibility, support and technical assistance for schools that need them most.
- Requiring schools and districts to collect and report meaningful data.
- Using growth models to measure the progress of schools and students.

## Daily Briefing

- Including students with disabilities and English language learners appropriately.
  - Fully funding the implementation of NCLB.
- The brief represents the positions of the more than 50 national organizations belonging to NHTA, a group based on a commitment to fostering high achievement, closing the achievement gap, and promoting civic and personal growth among all youth in the country's high schools and communities.

*The policy brief can be viewed at [www.hsalliance.org/policy/index.asp](http://www.hsalliance.org/policy/index.asp).*

### Funding Alert

#### HHS seeks Head Start partners for ELL classes

**Scope:** The Health and Human Services Department's Administration for Children and Families invites applications for research to improve outcomes for English language learners in Head Start and Early Head Start.

**Deadline:** March 5.

**Funds:** \$1 million for first-year funding of 10 awards of \$100,000 to \$300,000 a year each, with one to three grants per priority. The project period is three years.

**Eligibility:** Higher education institutions and non-profit organizations.

**Areas:** Grants support research to improve Head Start policies and practices, increasing the effectiveness of services to ELLs ages zero to five and their families. Applicants must address one of three priorities, which will be evaluated by different criteria: development and/or evaluation of curricula/interventions for English language learners and their families; development and/or evaluation of assessment instruments; and research on the relationship between language, culture and school readiness.

**Contact:** Tim Chappelle, (877) 663-0250.

**E-mail:** [opre@xtria.com](mailto:opre@xtria.com).

**Web:** [www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/index.html](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/index.html).

#### ED grants would expand school choice

**Scope:** The Education Department seeks applications to provide grants to establish or expand voluntary public school choice.

**Deadline:** Feb. 26 for notice; April 2 for applications.

**Funds:** \$26 million for 10 to 15 awards for up to 60 months, averaging \$2 million per year.

**Eligibility:** State/local educational agencies, including in partnership with nonprofits and for-profits.

**Areas:** ED favors partnership and inter-district approaches; a wide variety of choices; substantial impact on students in low-performing schools; secondary schools; and student achievement data.

**Contact:** Iris Lane, (202) 260-1999.

**E-mail:** [vpssc@ed.gov](mailto:vpssc@ed.gov).

**Web:** [www.ed.gov/news/fedregister/announce/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/news/fedregister/announce/index.html) (see Feb. 1).

## Bits & Pieces



■ **Take It or Leave It:** Joel Packer of the National Education Association said requiring districts to share highly qualified teachers equally among schools doesn't take the human element into account. "It doesn't work if you force someone to work where they don't want to work," he said. "They're not indentured servants; they can just go to another school district."

■ **Been There:** The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee wound up in the dark during markups of Head Start and mental health bills when a spectator accidentally turned off the lights. Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., who was speaking at the time, shared a similar experience with the committee's two presidential candidates. "To Sen. Dodd or Sen. Obama, the same thing happened to me in my first presidential debate just before I started to talk," he said, "and I should've taken the hint." Committee Chairman Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., waited for the gallery's laughter to subside before adding, "I know the feeling."

■ **Congressional Break:** Rep. Dale Kildee, D-Mich., said he felt like he was among like-minded people when addressing a group of education leaders recently. "I was a teacher in real life," he said. "I've taken this long sabbatical in Congress," he added, noting that he's served in the House for 30 years and was in the Michigan Legislature for 12 years before that.

■ **Sleepy Head:** Eva Baker, an education research professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, decided to dispel a myth about the American West at a recent Washington, D.C., event. She said she's heard some say people in that part of the country are very laid back about education. Not true, she said, noting the difficulty of presenting at a 9 a.m. E.S.T. forum because of the three-hour time difference. "We're just sleepy when we speak to you early in the morning."

■ **Fast Fact from the NCES:** During most of the last century, the trend to consolidate small schools brought a large decline in the total number of public schools in the United States. In 1929-30, there were approximately 248,000 public schools, compared with about 96,000 in 2003-04. But this number has grown in recent years, with an increase of approximately 10,300 schools between 1993-94 and 2003-04.

## Head Start

# HELP Committee OKs better-funded, remodeled Head Start

By Steve Berlin

Staff Writer

The **Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee** unanimously approved its markup of the Head Start reauthorization bill, which would significantly increase the early childhood education program's funds for the first time in four years.

Committee Chairman **Edward Kennedy**, D-Mass., called the Head Start for School Readiness Act a "bipartisan valentine" to the nation's children, but instead of chocolate, S. 556 proposes \$7.3 billion for the program in FY 2008, \$7.6 billion in FY 2009, and \$7.9 billion in FY 2010.

The increased funding, which enjoys strong bipartisan support, runs counter to **President Bush's** FY 2008 suggestion of cutting Head Start by \$100 million, from \$6.9 billion to approximately \$6.8 billion, and the program's flat funding of recent years. A **House Education and Labor Committee** spokesman said Head Start will be discussed in upcoming meetings.

"We know that in America we believe in competition and free enterprise and the starting line," said Sen. **Lamar Alexander**, R-Tenn., a committee member and one of the bill's sponsors, along with Kennedy, and Sens. **Chris Dodd**, D-

Conn., and ranking member **Mike Enzi**, R-Wyo. "But the best way to help a child get to one of the most important starting lines, which is school, is to help them be ready to learn."

Among the biggest changes to the existing Head Start law would be increasing program eligibility for low-income families. Currently, Head Start is open to children in families living below 100 percent of the federal poverty line, or \$20,600 for a family of four. The new bill would increase eligibility to families living at or below 130 percent of the poverty line, or \$26,800 for a family of four.

It would also require states to create local partnerships, expand services and align those services to state standards. The lack of program alignment has been cited by **Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt** as a program inefficiency.

The **Bush administration's** and **Congress'** intransigence on rolling back the tax cuts of recent years, however, could make finding more money for Head Start difficult, at least for some members.

"Well, you know the nice thing about being in the minority is it's not my problem this year," Enzi said with a chuckle. "I will work with the majority to see where we can do it and am pleased that both sides are talking about a balanced budget."

## Leavitt grilled in House on Head Start and hunger

By Steve Berlin

Staff Writer

Throughout the ongoing budget hearings, **Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt's** defense of the Head Start spending plan had remained unchallenged — until midway through his Tuesday appearance before the **House Budget Committee**.

Leavitt told the committee he had protected Head Start and other "high-demand, highly effective" programs during the budget process, but several representatives questioned his characterization of that protection.

The proposed Head Start budget for fiscal year 2008 is almost \$6.8 billion, representing a cut of about \$100 million from the amount allocated by **Congress** for FY 2006. In prior years, Head Start had been flat-funded at almost \$6.9 billion, without adjustments for inflation since 2003.

"You said you protected it. I would disagree," said Rep. **James McGovern**, D-Mass. "It would experience a 13 percent cut in real terms since 2002."

Rep. **Tim Bishop**, D-N.Y., said he was unclear on why the program was being cut if it was successful in preparing children for elementary

school and the requisite No Child Left Behind-mandated assessments. **McGovern** addressed Head Start in the context of how cuts would affect fighting hunger nationwide.

Transportation and hours of operation in programs would be adversely impacted by cuts, which could result in many children going a full day without eating a nutritious meal, McGovern said.

"When you cut back on days of service or transportation and a child can't get to the program, you're literally taking food out of a child's mouth," he said. "A hungry child most likely will end up being an unhealthy adult. A hungry child will most likely not be able to learn in school. I think in the long run it will end up costing us more."

Leavitt said the budget cuts would not impact services. Rather, program inefficiencies would be targeted so services could be maintained or improved.

"I'm not for hunger," he said. "We can do better with the program if we coordinate with our public schools and with school lunch programs. We don't. I believe we can do better with what we have."