

NCLB Round-Up June 2, 2009

Legislative Activity:

Congress was on recess last week but this weeks' schedule includes three education congressional hearings that may be of interest. Secretary Duncan will testify tomorrow (6/3) before the [Senate Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Subcommittee](#) at 9:30 and the [House Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Subcommittee](#) at 2:00. (Please note these times are Eastern Standard Time.)

On Thursday (6/4), the House Education and Labor Committee will hold a [hearing](#) about how the federal government can support charter schools. The following witnesses will testify:

- Steve Barr Founder and Chairman of the Board Green Dot Public Schools Los Angeles, CA
- David Dunn Director Texas Charter School Association Austin, TX
- Jim Goenner Board Chair National Association of Charter School Authorizers and lead authorizer at Central Michigan University Mount Pleasant, MI
- John King Managing Director Excellence Preparatory Network Uncommon Schools New York, NY
- Barbara O'Brien Lt. Governor Colorado
- Jim Shelton Assistant Deputy Secretary Office of Innovation and Improvement Department of Education

Also on Thursday, Secretary Duncan will be in Milwaukee and is scheduled to announce new educational opportunities for autoworkers, their families, and communities, as part of the Obama administration's federal economic recovery effort.

Last Friday, Secretary Duncan discussed President Obama's education agenda in a speech at the [National Press Club](#). He covered three main topics in his speech: raising standards, turning around our lowest performing schools, and saving \$4 billion each year with direct loans.

Excerpts from the speech can be found on [ED's Blog](#).

American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA):

Last week, ED released information about the authorization of [Qualified School Construction Bonds \(QSCBs\) and Build America Bonds \(BABs\), and the extension of Qualified Zone Academy Bonds \(QZABs\)](#). The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) makes QSCBs and BABs available for the first time, while extending and expanding the authority for QZABs. QZABs provide funding for school repairs and renovation and certain other activities for eligible schools and may not be used for new construction, while QSCBs and BABs provide funding for new construction as well as renovation.

Another resource that may be of interest is [The Education Recovery and Reinvestment Center](#), sponsored by Learning Point Associate, which includes stimulus-related events throughout the country on its [Calendar of Events](#) page and provides the latest reports by think tanks, associations, etc., on the [Other Organizations](#) page. Also, SFSF applications and approvals are included in their [State Resources Page](#) which is updated on a weekly basis. On a revised [District and Local Resources](#) page, stakeholders can find answers and resources for the top three commonly asked questions: 1) [What is the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009?](#); 2) [What are the appropriate uses of stimulus funds?](#), and

3) [What resources are available to leverage stimulus funds for lasting change?](#) *Please note, this is not an ISBE endorsement of the website or the material contained therein.*

Please continue to check [ISBE's ARRA webpage](#) and the [Weekly Message](#) for Illinois specific updates.

Events of Interest:

Yesterday, led by the [National Governors Association](#) and the [Council of Chief State School Officers](#), 46 states, including [Illinois](#), committed to a state-led initiative to develop a common core of state standards in English-language arts and mathematics for grades K-12. The overarching goal is to have a common core of state standards that states can voluntarily adopt. States may choose to include additional standards beyond the common core as long as the common core represents at least 85 percent of the state's standards in English-language arts and mathematics.

Next Tuesday (6/9), at an event at the National Press Club, [Education Week](#) and the [Editorial Projects in Education \(EPE\) Research Center](#) will release *Diploma Counts 2009*. The report is the fourth edition of an annual report on public high school graduation and reform. This year's report focuses on students' academic preparedness for postsecondary education, or "college readiness." It examines the type of academic preparation students receive, strategies for measuring readiness, and ways to hold schools accountable. **It should be noted that the EPE computes its on graduation rate based on a Cumulative Promotion Index, which is different than the NCLB graduation rate computation.**

Recent Reports:

[The Condition of Education 2009](#) from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) was recently released. The report states that test scores of American elementary school students continue to improve even as the scores and outcomes of secondary school students have stagnated. The *Condition of Education* is a congressionally mandated report compiled annually by the NCES to provide a portrait of education in the United States.

A new report released by The New Teacher Project focuses on schools failure to assess teacher effectiveness and treating teachers as interchangeable parts. [The Widget Effect: Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness](#) is a two-year research project spanning four states—Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois and Ohio—and 12 diverse districts, ranging in enrollment from 4,000 to over 400,000 students. The study illustrates that teacher evaluation systems reflect and codify the "Widget Effect"—the tendency of school districts to treat teachers are essentially interchangeable—in several major ways. To reverse the Widget Effect, the report contends that evaluation systems must generate accurate and credible information about each teacher's effectiveness in realizing student academic success. This information must then be used drive professional development and inform decision-making throughout the school district. Effective teaching must be recognized; ineffective teaching must be addressed.