Straight A’s: A Citizen’s Update on Education

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Straight A’s: A Citizen’s Update on Education is a biweekly newsletter that focuses on education news and events both in Washington, DC and around the country. The format makes information on education policy and key national issues accessible to everyone from elected officials and policymakers to parents and community leaders. The Alliance for Excellent Education is a non-profit organization working to help make it possible for every child in America to receive an excellent education. Our goal is to make an excellent education the right of every child, to establish this as national policy, and to make it a reality for all children within this decade. To learn more about the Alliance, please visit our website at http://www.all4ed.org or e-mail us at Alliance@all4ed.org.

In this issue: Pennsylvania and South Carolina school principals are nationally recognized.

Around the Capitol

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that authorizes K-12 programs for the next five years and the Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations bill are still before Congress. The two bills differ in that the ESEA bill does not allocate money; it only lays out the structure of the programs and sets a spending ceiling, or authorized level, for each program in the bill. The appropriations bill is an annual occurrence and serves as the vehicle through which Congress decides how much money it is actually willing to allocate for each of the federal education programs.

Neither the U.S. House of Representatives nor the U.S. Senate were in session the week of Nov. 19-23 due to the Thanksgiving holiday. Both chambers will be back in session on Tuesday, Nov. 27. The conference committee on ESEA could meet as early as Wednesday, Nov. 28, but the conference committee on the Fiscal Year 2002 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill is not expected to meet until early December. Education programs are currently being funded under a continuing resolution.

Did You Know?

A continuing resolution (CR) is a temporary funding measure that allows Congress to extend the time to pass spending bills and send them to the President for his signature. Continuing resolutions only fund the programs for which no annual appropriation bill has been signed into law by the President. A CR remains in effect until it is superseded by a signed appropriation bill, or until it expires and a new CR is passed. If Congress has still not passed all the appropriations bills by the time they recess for the year, a long-term CR that extends into next year is very possible.
The Senate version of the ESEA reauthorization (Senate HR 1) proposes a $14.067 billion increase for K-12 programs. The House has proposed an increase of $5.231 billion in its version of the bill (House HR 1). These bills represent the amounts that the House and Senate education committees agree is needed to sufficiently fund the new legislation. The graph below reflects the difference between the education committees suggested increase and the appropriations committees actual allocation of funds for this fiscal year.

On Friday, November 16, the Democratic staff of the Senate and House Committees on Education released a report entitled "Education in Crisis: The State Budget Crunch and Our Nation's Schools." The report argues that the continuing improvement of our nation's schools "could well rest on the actions of Congress and the White House over the next few weeks" as they meet to discuss the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill. In the report, Democrats argue for more federal funding and point out that the weak economy has forced states to cut an estimated $11.3 billion nationally from their fiscal 2002 school budgets. These cuts have come in the form of teacher layoffs, textbook cut backs, the elimination of teacher training, the postponement of school modernization, and the inclusion of more children into already cramped classrooms.

As seen in the above graph, both the House and Senate have appropriated spending increases over last year's funding levels, but neither bill met the Senate $14.07 billion increase authorized in the five-year ESEA bill. The original Bush budget came in far behind Congressional spending levels and called for only a $460 million increase over last year's totals.
Around the Country

Recently, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) named their Middle and High School Principals of the Year. **U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige** recognized the winners at an awards gala during the Principals’ Policy Institute for State and National Principals of the Year, which was held from Nov. 10-13. The MetLife NASSP National Principal of the Year program recognizes outstanding middle level and high school principals who demonstrate success in educational leadership, resolving complex problems, developing self and others, and community service.

*The 2002 MetLife/NASSP Middle School Principal of the Year is Dr. Kevin McHuge, principal at Pennwood Middle School in Yardley, Pennsylvania.* Dr. McHuge excels at being the instructional leader of his middle school, using his knowledge of the needs of adolescents, and his understanding of teaching methods, and the delivery of programs and services to consistently improve teaching and learning at Penwood. Dr. McHugh plans to use the $10,000 MetLife grant to purchase a student management software package that is aligned with the Pennsylvania academic standards and will provide teachers with a system for accurately tracking standards attainment of all students.

*The 2002 MetLife/NASSP High School Principal of the Year is Dr. Sharon Buddin, principal at Ridge View High School in Columbia, South Carolina.* Under Dr. Buddin’s leadership, Ridge View has incorporated a number of innovations to improve teaching and learning and academic success. These include revised class schedule options and four “schools within-a-school,” which have addressed the unique educational needs of various groups of students. Dr. Buddin will use the $10,000 MetLife grant to help establish a cyber café for educators and students in her school to provide a place for teachers and students to access technology, and give both groups a comfortable setting to extend their knowledge and skills.

*For more information on the 2002 Middle and High School Principals of the Year, please visit the National Association of Secondary School Principals’ website at [http://www.nassp.org](http://www.nassp.org).*

Ahead on the Calendar

Sponsored by the National Institute for Urban School Improvement, National Inclusive Schools Week will be held from December 3 through 7. It will highlight the progress of our nation’s schools in providing a supportive and quality education to an increasingly diverse student population, while offering educators, students, and parents an opportunity to discuss what else needs to be done to ensure that their schools continue to improve their ability to successfully educate *all* children.

*For more information on National Inclusive Schools Week, please visit the National Institute for Urban School Improvement at [http://www.edc.org/urban/nisw.html](http://www.edc.org/urban/nisw.html).*