



Straight A's

Public Education Policy And Progress



YOU TAKE THE HIGH ROAD AND I'LL TAKE THE LOW ROAD: As Appropriations Process Begins, Different Spending Approaches Likely to Delay Process Until After November Elections

As Congress gets to work determining how much federal money various departments and programs will receive this year, the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate have set discretionary spending limits that are approximately \$19 billion apart—a development that is likely to delay the appropriations process until after the November elections.¹

On one hand, the House adopted a congressional budget resolution that capped discretionary spending in Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 at \$1.028 trillion while the Senate chose to stick to the \$1.047 trillion amount set by last summer's Budget Control Act, which raised the debt ceiling. As the appropriations process got underway in mid-April, the different spending priorities became even clearer as the House allocated \$8 billion more for defense spending than the Senate, while the Senate chose to provide \$8 billion more in funding for labor, health, and education programs than the House.

When **House Appropriations Committee Chairman Hal Rogers (R-KY)** announced the funding allocations that the twelve appropriations subcommittees would have to work with—known as 302(b)s²—he [said](#) the allocations “demonstrate how seriously this House takes its charge to rein in extraneous and unnecessary spending, encourage economic competitiveness and job growth, help strengthen the nation’s infrastructure, and ensure a strong national security for the protection of all Americans.”

During the House Appropriations Committee’s consideration of Rogers’s allocations, **Representative Norm Dicks (D-WA), top Democrat on the committee**, expressed his opposition to the lower number adopted by the House.

“The Democratic objection to relitigating \$1.047 [trillion] is substantive as well as procedural,” [Dicks said](#). “Our economy has just begun to show signs of recovery. To introduce uncertainty about discretionary spending, and about whether representatives in the House will make another

¹ Discretionary spending, as opposed to mandatory spending, is the type of federal spending that Congress decides on each year through the appropriations process.

² The 302(b)s set the overall funding amount that an appropriations subcommittee can spend within a particular appropriations bill. The individual subcommittees then allocate that overall amount among individual programs within the appropriations bill.

effort to shut down the government, will not help. Moreover, the effort to choke off even more discretionary spending will clearly stall economic growth and impede job creation.”

Unlike the House, where Republicans and Democrats disagreed over what the spending cap should be, both Democrats and Republicans on the Senate Appropriations Committee chose to abide by the \$1.047 trillion amount set by the Budget Control Act. In adopting the cap by a 27–2 vote, **Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY)** and all but two Republicans on the committee voted with Democrats.

“It is appropriate in my view for the [Senate Appropriations] Committee to proceed on the basis of the discretionary caps enacted into law [by the Budget Control Act],” [said Senator Thad Cochran \(R-MS\), top Republican on the Senate Appropriations Committee.](#) “Not all members of the committee supported the Budget Control Act. Seventy-four Senators did support it, however, including a majority of the members of both parties in the Senate and a majority of members on both sides of the committee. ... it is certainly reasonable for us to proceed consistent with the law.”

Under the House plan, the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education departments would receive a combined \$150.002 billion in funding while the Senate plan would fund these departments at \$157.722 billion, a difference of \$7.72 billion. Meanwhile, the House would fund the U.S. Department of Defense at \$519.220 billion versus \$511.161 billion in the Senate, a difference of \$8.059 billion. The large differences in the subcommittee allocations will make it more difficult for the House and Senate to agree on FY 2013 appropriations bills for these departments.

While the House and Senate were working on their respective plans, the Obama administration urged both chambers to honor the spending levels set by the Budget Control Act (BCA). “Disregarding the BCA agreement and cutting already-tight discretionary program levels even further would be a serious mistake,” **Office of Management and Budget Director Jacob J. Lew** wrote in a [letter to the chairman and ranking member of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees.](#)

While acknowledging the need to reduce discretionary spending, Lew stressed the importance of critical investments in education, innovation, and infrastructure. He called on Congress to “fund policy initiatives needed for [the nation’s] long-term economic health, including health care, financial reforms, and education reforms necessary to “give every child the tools to succeed in the modern global economy.” He said these areas are “crucial to strengthening our families and communities and spurring economic growth and job creation.”

Lew concluded by saying that President Obama would veto any bill that fails to meet these priorities and he offered other conditions that appropriations bills would need to meet to garner the president’s signature.

“If the president is presented with a bill that undermines critical domestic priorities or national security through funding levels or language restrictions, contains earmarks, or fails to make the tough choices to cut where needed while maintaining what we need to spur long-term job creation and win the future, the president will veto the bill.”



TRANSFORMING CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION: Obama Administration Releases Blueprint to Make Career and Technical Education More Rigorous, Relevant, and Results Driven

On April 19, **U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan** released the Obama administration's blueprint to transform career and technical education (CTE) by reauthorizing the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education (Perkins) Act of 2006.

“Rigorous, relevant, and results-driven CTE programs are vital to preparing students to succeed in the global economy of the twenty-first century,” Duncan said. “Unfortunately, too many of the nation’s CTE programs fail today to meet the standard of being relevant, rigorous, and results driven. And so the need to transform career and technical education for the twenty-first century is urgent. This is not a time to tinker.”

According to the blueprint, the 2006 Perkins Act reauthorization “took modest yet important steps” to improve the quality of CTE programs, but it “did not go far enough to address the needs of youths and adults preparing to participate in the knowledge-based, global marketplace of the twenty-first century.”

In his remarks describing the administration’s blueprint at the Des Moines Area Community College in Ankeny, Iowa, Duncan stressed the importance of lifelong learning in today’s knowledge-based, globally competitive economy. He said the traditional goal of CTE—students earning a diploma and getting a job after high school—has to change. Instead, CTE’s goal should be that students “earn an industry certification and postsecondary certificate or degree, and land a job that leads to a successful career,” Duncan said.

The administration’s blueprint to revamp CTE is shaped by four principles:

1. Effective alignment between CTE and labor market needs to equip students with twenty-first-century skills and prepare them for in-demand occupations in high-growth industry sectors.
2. Strong collaboration among secondary and postsecondary institutions, employers, and industry partners to improve the quality of CTE programs.
3. Meaningful accountability for improving academic outcomes and building technical and employability skills in CTE programs, based upon common definitions and clear metrics for performance.
4. Increased emphasis on innovation supported by systemic reform of state policies and practices to support CTE implementation of effective practices at the local level.

While acknowledging that CTE programs would be designed differently across the country, the administration’s blueprint believes successful programs should share certain characteristics. For example, CTE programs must offer a streamlined and structured sequence of courses that span secondary and postsecondary education, lead to an industry certification or license and a postsecondary certificate or degree, and enable graduates to gain employment in a high-growth industry upon program completion. Secondary school teachers and college faculty would work together to teach integrated academic, career, and technical content that enables students to better grasp the material and demonstrates connections to real-life career scenarios and choices.

Additionally, school districts, postsecondary institutions, and employers would collaborate to offer students opportunities to participate in work-based learning and to accelerate completion of their studies through dual or concurrent credits. Technology would be used to increase access to high-quality learning opportunities, particularly for students in rural or remote areas.

“When done properly, career and technical education keeps students engaged in their school work, provides them with rigorous courses, offers them relevance to the world around them, and prepares them for additional education after high school—a must in today’s economy,” said **Bob Wise, president of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia**. “If the nation is to prepare all students for college and a career, career and technical education must be an essential part of the education reform process and a key component of the nation’s education system. The Obama administration’s blueprint is an important step in that direction.”

Download the blueprint for transforming career and technical education at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cte/transforming-career-technical-education.pdf>.

Read Governor Wise’s complete statement on the blueprint at http://www.all4ed.org/press_room/press_releases/04202012.



HIDDEN HOMELESS: Bureaucratic Red Tape Leaves 715,238 Eligible Homeless Children Without Support in United States, New Alliance Analysis Finds

Approximately 77 percent of students in the United States identified as homeless by the U.S. Department of Education are ineligible for homeless services from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) because of red tape, according to a new analysis by the Alliance for Excellent Education.

Nationwide, approximately 715,238 homeless students are caught in this bureaucratic gap between the Department of Education and HUD, where the former classifies these young people as homeless, but the latter does not. As a result, many homeless students do not have access to HUD services, including shelter, permanent housing, case management, substance abuse treatment, and more. (Click on the image to the right to hear homeless students tell how they became homeless and describe the challenges—educational and otherwise—that they face in their high school careers.)



“It is absurd that under current law, a child can be considered homeless by one federal agency but not by another,” said **Bob Wise, president of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia**. “Homeless students face enough barriers in their pursuit of a high school diploma without having to jump through federal hoops. It’s time to cut through this federal bureaucracy and ensure that all homeless children have access to the services they need and deserve.”

Under the Department of Education’s definition, children, youth, and families who have lost their homes and are staying temporarily with others or in motels are considered homeless. These

children are often referred to as the “hidden homeless” because they are not as visible as adults living on the streets, but they are just as vulnerable and in just as much need of services.

HUD’s definition of homelessness largely ignores children and focuses primarily on single adults living on the streets and in shelters. In order to be considered homeless by HUD, a youth or family temporarily staying in a motel or with others can stay there for no more than fourteen days and must be able to prove the temporary nature of their stay in writing.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act (H.R. 32), which is currently pending before the U.S. Congress, can close this gap by aligning HUD’s definition of homelessness with that of the Department of Education. Under the legislation, children, youth, and families could be verified as homeless by four different programs: Head Start; Education for Homeless Children and Youth program administered by public schools; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act program; and early intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

“Under current law and regulations, between 41 percent and 91 percent of the homeless students in each state are ineligible for much-needed services from HUD,” Wise said. “The Homeless Children and Youth Act would remove this barrier and give students and their families access to services they desperately need.”

The complete analysis is available at <http://www.all4ed.org/files/HomelessFallingThroughGaps.pdf>.



OFF THE CLOCK: New Report Examines How Extended Time Can Impact Student Learning

While acknowledging that support and funding for extended learning time (ELT) have grown considerably in the past several years, a new report from Education Sector finds that more time is not necessarily the cure for poor student performance. Instead, the report, *Off the Clock: What More Time Can (and Can’t) Do for School Turnarounds*, argues that time, like money, is only a resource, but whether it will help children learn depends on how it is used.

“To suggest that our nation’s worst schools will be transformed, and that student outcomes will improve, because of more time is not any different than suggesting that they will be transformed by more money,” the report says. “Both are necessary, and both boast plenty of persuasive adages about why more is better. But both are overly simplistic treatments to the very complex problem of improving education.”

The report notes that, even as funding for public education has declined dramatically due to budget cuts, supporters argue that time beyond the traditional school day can help close the “opportunity gap” between more affluent students, who are exposed to a range of activities outside of school hours, including dance, swimming, karate, and even robotics classes, and low-income students, who often spend their afternoons watching television, caring for siblings, and working.

At the same time, however, the report also notes that this opportunity gap is not restricted to out-of-school time. In fact, poor children are more likely to attend schools with less experienced teachers, more leader and staff turnover, cultures of low expectations, and overall records of

failure, the report argues, saying “More time is not enough to counter the sobering reality that these lowest-performing schools just don’t have the people they need.”

Within the last few years, ELT has received billions of federal stimulus dollars to expand learning time on behalf of disadvantaged children, the report finds. Additionally, it notes that the Department’s effort to grant states waivers under the No Child Left Behind Act includes a “major bet” on ELT. In 2011, Education Sector examined state waiver applications under the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program and found that more than 90 percent of all SIG grantees chose a school improvement strategy that incorporates ELT. In its analysis, Education Sector found that some applicants described “comprehensive, well-designed improvement strategies” incorporating ELT, while others merely “[shaved] a few minutes off recess and lunch and [redirected] them to ‘instruction.’” It is this balance between more time for more time’s sake and time as part of a more comprehensive reform that occupies much of *Off the Clock*.

The report notes that there is an “enormous difference” between time that is “technically” allocated for instruction and time spent “authentically engaging” students in learning. It points to research finding no significant positive relationship between the amount of mere “allocated” time and student achievement. “Put simply, not all time in school has the same impact on learning,” the report notes.

Based on the Education Sector analysis, the report examines three main approaches schools are taking to extend learning time: (1) adding time to the formal school schedule; (2) expanding learning outside of the regular school schedule; and (3) changing the way time is used within the school day. Within each of these options, the report finds success stories and approaches that add extra time but do not necessarily change what goes on during those extra hours.

Under the first method, adding time to the school day—which, the report notes, is the least common approach among SIG grantees because it is expensive and typically means changing teacher work schedules—Matthew J. Kuss Middle School in Massachusetts is highlighted. It was the first school in the state to transform itself from “chronically underperforming” in 2004 to not even eligible for SIG funds today. At the school, all students spend 30 percent more time in school and teachers are provided with additional development time. According to **Nancy Mullen, the school’s principal**, more time is not the only reason for the school’s success, but she says it is a big one. At the same time, however, Mullen is not sure how the school will continue to fund teacher salaries, which have increased by 25 percent under ELT, once SIG money runs out in three years. According to the report, the personnel costs alone of extending time are estimated to be “at least \$1,300 more per student per year.”

The second option featured in the report, expanding time outside of school, is the most common ELT approach because it “avoids much of the cost and controversy of paying for and restructuring teacher’s work.” The report compares it to traditional afterschool, Saturday, and summer school programs, but it notes that there is “nothing simple” about expanding time outside of the school schedule. In particular, almost all schools with plans to use this option rely on a community partner, external provider, or both, as well as additional staff, such as volunteers or members of a public service corps. Additionally, an intermediary is often needed to coordinate partners, manage staff, and coordinate funds.

According to the report, the final approach, using existing time differently, sounds sensible, but its results “often fall well short of the mark.” The report finds that schools using this approach frequently propose to gain time for instruction by decreasing noninstructional time—namely lunch, recess, or the time allotted for students to move between classes—and redeploying it throughout the day for more math or reading instruction. But not all schools included in the report fall into this “nickel and dime” approach. Instead, they are restructuring existing time to ensure that students are better engaged and have access to quality learning opportunities. Some schools featured in the report, such as Gentry High School in Massachusetts and New York City’s School of One, are using technology to boost learning time. “What is clear is that technology is rapidly expanding as an educational tool and will surely expand options not just for extending time but for enhancing learning,” the report notes.

Most schools cited in the report that have succeeded with extended time have done so because they include time as part of a more comprehensive reform. For example, schools in Massachusetts must commit to redesigning their entire education program—including staffing, labor agreements, compensation, and scheduling—to receive state ELT funds. “These schools are not just adding time to compensate for what they lack,” the report notes, “they are integrating time into an overall model for successful teaching and learning.”

Off the Clock is available at <http://bit.ly/InvdaI>.

Webinar Examines How Schools and Districts Can Leverage Time Beyond School to Accelerate Student Achievement

On April 19, the Coalition for a College- and Career-Ready America held a webinar, “Leveraging the Time Beyond School to Accelerate Student Achievement,” that examined how student achievement can be improved and accelerated when schools and districts rethink and reconfigure what happens during and beyond the traditional six-hour school day.

The webinar featured **Elena Silva, senior policy analyst at Education Sector** and author of the recent report, *Off the Clock: What More Time Can (and Can’t) Do for School Turnarounds*. It also featured **Joe Davis, chief operating officer for the Florida Afterschool Network**, who presented research confirming that high-quality afterschool programs can have a positive impact on student attendance, behavior, and course-work performance, and **Lucy Friedman, president of the After-School Corporation (TASC)**. Friedman discussed TASC’s model for an active, balanced learning day that gives students approximately 35 percent more learning time at just 10 percent of the cost of the school day. **Phillip Lovell, vice president for federal advocacy at the Alliance for Excellent Education**, discussed how federal education policy, including the administration’s waiver policy under the No Child Left Behind Act and the federal School Improvement Grant program, impacts efforts to extend the school day.

Archived video and PowerPoint presentations from the webinar are available at <http://bit.ly/Ii6aBm>.

Straight A’s: Public Education Policy and Progress is a biweekly newsletter that focuses on education news and events in Washington, DC and around the country. The format makes information on federal education policy accessible to everyone from elected officials and policymakers to parents and community leaders. Contributors include Jason Amos, editor; Kenya Downs, communications associate; and Kate Bradley, copyeditor.

The Alliance for Excellent Education is a national policy and advocacy organization that works to improve national and federal policy so that all students can achieve at high academic levels and graduate from high school ready for success in college, work, and citizenship in the twenty-first century. For more information about the Alliance, visit <http://www.all4ed.org>.