



International Reading Association

Legislative Action Team Update

September 30, 2009

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Webinar on local schools' uses of stimulus funds on October 13th 8:00 PM Eastern. See page 2

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Legislative Mini-Workshop – one of three options for this school year. First on October 8 and 9 in DC Pages 5 & 6

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What's going on

In late September and early October the Congress is usually focused on appropriations and setting the stage to complete committee work on various rewriting of federal statutes. Instead, almost all attention is on the various rules and regulations being proposed by the United States Department of Education to spend the education stimulus money. By contrast the Congress is focused on the “big picture” items of health care reform and links between the environment and trade/industry.

At the same time in the background there is still activity. This update has information on a recently House passed measure that will increase attention on early childhood education and make changes to the student loan program. Members of Congress are hearing about a comprehensive literacy proposal that would provide funds for school districts to provide professional development activities. The proposal is currently being reviewed by several Members of Congress and is expected to be introduced before the end of this session of Congress.

In mid-September Arne Duncan, the U.S. Secretary of Education, announced that the Department will be pushing the Congress to reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Act quickly. While most observers believe that this will not happen until after the 2010 elections, the secretary is moving ahead. The reasons most observers believe that this will not be rewritten before the fall 2010 Congressional elections are many. One, Republicans believe they will have more Congressional seats after 2010 and thus more impact. Second, many Democrats who would be working on education are involved in the health debate – and in



the U.S. Department of Education they have been focused on the many rules and regulations that have been proposed (the relevance is that there are a lot of new policies in these new rules that are taking time to be enacted).

In September several key areas of education reform and the stimulus funds were the subject of rule making. One of them is the “Uses of Funds.” This is an important concept for local schools to understand, that they can use funds under the stimulus act for professional development activities. The “Uses of Funds” document can be found at: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/guidance/titlei-reform.pdf>.

For more information on local uses of stimulus funds, such as School Improvement, teacher incentives, innovations, uses of technology, professional development, plan to participate in an IRA webinar on: Tuesday, October 13, 2009 at 8:00 PM EASTERN.

To register go to irawash@reading.org.

Provision in H.R. 3221, “The Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009”

The Early Learning Challenge Fund

The “Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009” ,which is largely designed to overhaul the student loan program, was passed by the House of Representatives on September 17 moving The Early Learning Challenge Fund closer to becoming law. The Senate's Health, Labor, Education and Pensions Committee is expected to deliberate this bill, during the Fall.

The Early Learning Challenge Fund would allow the federal government to distribute \$1 billion each year over eight years in the form of grants to states. State would not get the money automatically but would have to show that they are building high-quality systems for disadvantaged children, birth to 5. States that receive Early Learning Challenge Fund awards would be required to:

- Develop and establish a system of research-based metrics and measures for addressing the quality and effectiveness of early childhood settings;
- Develop and implement a plan to assess the quality of early care and education programs and providers in the state;
- Implement data systems to track children enrolled in early learning programs through at least third grade;



- Align early learning standards with K-3 standards;
- Develop a rigorous monitoring and technical assistance plan;
- Use developmentally appropriate assessment tools linked to child outcomes;
- Collect baseline data on early learning programs across the state; and
- Develop and use program evaluation strategies to establish the effectiveness of early childhood programs.

This program that would grow over time: providing relatively modest funding to support infrastructure development in its first years, adding funding in 2011 to sustain stimulus-funded early childhood investments, and once states have infrastructure in place, increasing funding still further to support the expansion of early childhood services.

Community Colleges

On July 14, 2009, President Obama announced the American Graduation Initiative, to provide new federal support for community colleges. Due to their size and focus on community colleges, the President's set of proposals is distinctive. The 10-year plan consists of:

- A "Community College Challenge Fund" for new and improved workforce training programs, high school dual enrollment programs, and increased access to "wrap around" services such as tutoring and childcare to increase persistence.
- The "College Access and Completion Fund," to fund innovative efforts to increase college graduation and close achievement gaps.
- \$2.5 billion in federal funds to stimulate \$10 billion in community college facilities construction and renovation.
- A national "Online Skills Laboratory" for grants to develop open, free courses for high school and college career-oriented curricula.

Core Standards

A revised draft of 'Common Core' Standards has been released for public comment until October 21 at <http://www.corestandards.org/>. The math and language arts standards will be reviewed by a "validation committee," whose members will be named in the coming weeks.

Forty-eight states have been working toward a Common Core to establish more uniform expectations for the nation's students, in contrast to the wide variations in academic standards that exist among the states today. Two organizations that work closely with states are leading the process: the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA). Teams of working groups consisting mostly of representatives of Achieve, the College Board and ACT have drafted the language arts and mathematics standards. Committees of outside experts reviewed the standards.



As the college- and career-readiness standards move forward, CCSSO and NGA officials also will begin work this fall on a second phase: devising a separate set of standards for grades K-12.

“While this document defines the outcomes all students need to reach to be college- and career-ready,” it says, “many important decisions about curriculum will necessarily be left to states, districts, schools, teachers, professional organizations, and parents.”

IRA has written a letter to the Committee noting that the draft reflects an interest in developing standards that can be used to help students become more effective learners and shows that one of the goals is to be clear and concise so that the core standards can be used by teachers.

However, IRA has expressed concerns that:

- The draft standards do not adequately represent the kinds of reading that students enrolled in college prep classes are completing, nor the kinds of reading they will be asked to do in college.
- The overall view of reading and writing is out of date and does not reflect current thinking in the field.
- The standards are inconsistent with the definitions of reading in the PISA, PIRLS, and NAEP assessments.
- The draft standards pay little attention to reading online, or to using and analyzing online information.
- Almost all of the reading statements refer to comprehension of a single text, while we want students to be able to compare and cross reference information across texts.
- There is an over-emphasis on literal comprehension as opposed to higher order comprehension or critical analysis. A related point is that some of the items appear appropriate for the upper elementary grades, but not for a high school graduate.



AGENDA
October 8 - 9, 2009 Washington, DC
Government Relations Legislative Workshop, IRA

Thursday, October 8, 2009 – Hall of States, Room 385

- 11:30 – 12:00 Registration
- 12:00 - 1:00 Lunch (provided for all workshop participants)
- Welcome and Introductions
- Discussion of Reading Legislation including:
- Comprehensive Literacy Bill
 - Reauthorization of NCLB
 - Middle School Reform Legislation
 - Funding
- 1:00 – 2:00 Initiatives At Department Of Education And How Reading Will Be Impacted:
- Professional Development
 - School Improvement Grants
 - Race To The Top
 - Other Programs
- 2:00 – 3:00 Meeting Your Legislator:
- How to deliver your message
 - Talking Points
 - Comprehensive Literacy Bill
 - Funding for reading programs
- 3:00 - 5:30 Hill Visits

Friday, October 9, 2009 - Hall of States - Room 385

- 8:30 - 9:00 Breakfast (provided)
- 9:00 -12:00 Applying Lessons Learned to State Advocacy
- How can you help your State and Local Council in their advocacy efforts?
- Selecting Issues
 - Teaching others how to talk about these issues
 - Being engaged in the “the process”
- 12:00 - 1:00 Lunch (provided)
- 1:00-3:00 Identify Legislative Issues and Set Priorities



**2009 Governmental Relations Workshop Registration Form
October 8 - 9, 2009
Washington, DC**

**Strengthen your and your council's ability to impact legislation
by providing the best training and information!**

The 2009 Legislative Workshop features a brand new Congress. Learn from sessions for those new to the advocacy effort — and those with years of experience. We will train workshop participants to be effective advocates on both federal and state issues. Participants will have the opportunity to meet with their Members of Congress and/or their staffs on Capitol Hill.

This is a *no-cost workshop* hosted by IRA's Washington Office and the Government Relations Committee.

- **Register** by filling out the form below and mailing or faxing to *IRA Washington Office at 444 N. Capitol St. NW, Suite 523, Washington, DC 20001; Fax: 202 624-8826*

REGISTRATION (PLEASE PRINT)

(To register, please mail or fax to the IRA Washington Office at 444 N. Capitol St. NW, Suite 523, Washington, DC 20001; Fax: 202 624-8826)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (H) _____ (B) _____

E-mail: _____

Required: Your representative in the House of Representatives:

Your occupation or former occupation:

Circle the days you will attend:

Full Workshop Thurs. only Fri. only



Interested in specialized policy information?

The Obama Administration and the new Congress are working on a wide range of issues that impact literacy. In order to manage this flow of information, we are creating email lists that will provide you with information on specific areas by topic. If you decide to subscribe to any of the groups, email us and we will add you. If you want to take yourself off, you will be able to do that at any time.

Please let us know if you want to be added to any of the following groups:

- Early Childhood Literacy Policy
- K-4 Literacy Policy
- Adolescent Literacy Policy (middle and high school)
- Adult Literacy Policy
- Teacher Education (related to literacy) Policy

You can let us know by indicating your interest or calling 202-624-8800 or emailing us at irawash@reading.org