

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

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State News

NC Wins Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant

Governor Bev Perdue announced on Friday that North Carolina was among nine winners selected to receive a share of \$500 million dollars from a pool of 37 applicants. California, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Washington were the other recipients. NC's proposal which was ranked #1 by the outside peer reviewers who judged the competition received full funding, nearly \$70 million dollars.

These new funds cannot be used to increase capacity in existing services, i.e. the Pre-K program. The grant proposal contained elements designed to add value to existing investments and to increase their impact and effectiveness. Some of the proposed initiatives in the grant application include:

Increasing the quality of early learning programs in underserved areas

Expanding diagnostic screening programs to ensure early intervention for health and developmental problems for children

Improving and expanding systems to gauge children's progress

Providing incentives and resources to support and strengthen the state's early childhood workforce

Providing training and assistance to help early childhood educators better engage family members in a child's early development

Establishing a "Transformation Zone" in high needs counties in Northeast NC

One of the elements that reportedly made North Carolina's application so attractive was the level of organization and collaboration across government agencies and the private and public sector outlined for the proposed initiatives. US Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius says this "holistic approach is one thing that ties together the nine [winning] states." The process of transforming a successful paper proposal into concrete action will take a profound level of commitment from all vested stakeholders.

School Boards Support Teaching Fellows

The North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission and staff are elated to learn that numerous school boards across North Carolina have passed resolutions in support of the restoration of the Teaching Fellows Program. No one knows the value of having quality teachers more than superintendents and local board of education members. Since the program update was shared at the Superintendents' Winter Conference in early December, several boards have passed a resolution at their December meetings. Hopefully, others will do so at their January meetings.

The following local boards of education have recently passed a Resolution in Support of the Restoration of the Teaching Fellows Program:

Alamance-Burlington Board of Education, Jackie Cole, Chair; Dr. Lillie Cox, Supt.

Avery County Board of Education, John L. Greene, Chair; David Burleson, Supt.

Cumberland County Board of Education, Carrie Sutton, Chair; Dr. Frank Till, Supt.

Edenton-Chowan Board of Education, Ricky Browder, Chair; Dr. Allan Smith, Supt.

Guilford County Board of Education, Alan W. Duncan, Chair; Maurice Green, Supt.

Hoke County Board of Education, Hank Richards, Chair; Dr. Freddie Williamson, Supt.

Jackson County Board of Education, Ken Henke, Chair; Michael Murray, Supt.

Richmond County Board of Education, Wiley L. Mabe, Chair; Dr. George Norris, Supt.

Surry County Board of Education, Sexton E. Coe, Chair; Dr. Ashley Hinson, Jr., Supt.

Vance County Board of Education, Gloria J. White, Chair; Ronald Gregory, Supt.

Watauga County Board of Ed., Deborah H. Miller, Chair; Dr. Marty Hemric, Supt.

Whiteville City Board of Education, James DiMuzio, Chair; Dr. C. T. Hager, Supt.

Dr. Mike Priddy, former superintendent and NC Teaching Fellows Commission Chair stated, "Having had the privilege of hiring the first Teaching Fellows graduate and many more since then, I personally know their value to our children, classrooms, and schools. I also know that every principal, superintendent, and school board member in NC appreciates the quality that is so very predictable. Even though there are many important, even competing, educational priorities, we must remain diligent in seeking support for the re-instatement of the Teaching Fellows Program. In the short run, that means continuing to work for the \$3.7M in the state budget."

CEP Releases 2010-11 AYP Report

The Center on Education Policy, a Washington D.C. based non-profit that advocates for better public education and more effective public schools, has released its annual report on Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP is the central measure for rating school performance under No Child Left Behind. The CEP is a non partisan entity and the annual report puts on display exactly what the data attained through various state and federal government reporting agencies show.

That said, even the CEP's president, Jack Jennings is among the first to admit that the report highlights what many have feared about the pitfalls of having an absolute rigid standard for measurement since NCLB began.

Here are the CEP's main findings:

An estimated 48% of the nation's public schools did not make AYP in '10-'11

In 24 states and D.C. at least half of the public schools did not make AYP. In a majority of the states (43 & D.C.), at least ¼ of the schools didn't make AYP

The percentage of public schools not making AYP in 2011 varied greatly by state from about 11% in Wisconsin to 89% in Florida (72 % in NC)

Jennings says, "The fact that half of American schools are considered 'failing' under NCLB shows how crudely the law measures the quality of a school."

At the conclusion of the report it is noted that as many as 39 states plus Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. have applied for or indicated they will apply for a waiver under the US Department of Education's official ESEA flexibility plan. Unless Congress or the Executive Branch enacts changes, expect that number to rise as 2014 approaches. That is when every school is expected to have every student at a 100% absolute standard regardless of situation or circumstance.

View the Center on Education Policy's full AYP report on the [CEP website](#).

Food for Thought...

Military Schools May Hold Answers

“Military Children Stay a Step Ahead of Public School Students,” reads the title of a recently published New York Times article. If that doesn't peak curiosity, consider that the author, Michael Winerip, chose none other than Onslow County, North Carolina, as the case study for the piece. The article explores the implications of recently released National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores when comparing schools on military bases to the public schools in the local school district nearest the base.

The NY Times article does not single out the specific scores for Camp Lejeune and/or Onslow County students, rather it focuses on nationwide data and uses the Camp Lejeune area as a resource for exploring possible reasons for the differences in performance. The data shows that nationwide, schools on military bases are outperforming public schools in both reading and math tests administered to fourth and eighth graders. Additionally, the achievement gap between black and white students is much smaller and continues to shrink faster at the military base schools than at public schools.

Nationwide, 2011 NAEP reading test results show a 26 point gap between the scores of black and white fourth graders in public schools. The gap is 11 points at the military base schools. In fact, black fourth graders at the military base schools (with a score of 222) outscored fourth graders as a whole nationwide (221). Over the past decade, the gap in fourth grade reading scores between black and white students at the base schools has declined by 31% while the public schools have only seen a 13% reduction.

Many theories as to why there is such a measurable difference are floated in the NY Times article. Perhaps one that deems further investigation is the influence of state and federal testing requirements. The article states that “standardized tests do not dominate and are not used to rate teachers, principals, or schools.” Leigh Anne Kapiko, the principal at Tarawa Terrace Elementary School at Camp LeJeune in regards to test preparation is quoted as saying, “No, that's not done in Department of Defense schools. We don't even have test prep materials.” “We don't have to be so regimented, since we're not worried about a child's ability to bubble on a test... Children are children; they're not little Marines,” says Mrs. Kapiko.

Parental engagement, community (base wide) support, discipline structure, class size and military family support mechanisms are among the other influences cited. The exact cause of the differences in results is likely multifaceted and perhaps complex but based on the writer's findings in this article it is definitely worth further investigation. For more information, read Mike Winerip's full article on the New York Times [website](#).

Forum News...

 ***Happy Holidays from the Staff*** 
at the Public School Forum

The staff at the Public School Forum would like to wish a very Happy Holiday Season to all of our Friday Report readers!

The *Friday Report* will resume publication on January 6, 2012.
The Forum office will close December 21 at 1:00 pm
and re-open on January 3rd at 8:30 am.

Happy New Year!

Quote of the week...

"It is the one season of the year when we can lay aside all gnawing worry, indulge in sentiment without censure, assume the carefree faith of childhood, and just plain 'have fun.' Whether they call it Yuletide, Noel, Weinachten, or Christmas, people around the earth thirst for its refreshment as the desert traveler for the oasis." –

D.D. Monroe

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