The August Recess Ends

President Bush returned to Washington to kick off the fall season. Congress is back in town too. President Bush began the dialogue with Senate Republican leader Lott and Senate majority leader Daschle to discuss the 13 spending bills that the House, Senate and President must approve in order to keep the government running after September 30.

The Conference Committee on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) has met only once since members were appointed in late July. However, during the August recess, staff of the Conferees has been meeting to work towards an agreement on the House and Senate ESEA bills. Staff is focusing on less controversial issues, saving more controversial ones until after their Members return in September.

Reported by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), Representative Langevin (D-RI) sent "dear colleague" letters addressed to the House and Senate Minority and Majority ESEA Conference Leaders urging them to adopt provisions for greater flexibility in how states meet the testing requirements in the new ESEA bill through state and local testing. States would be able to use a combination of state and local tests aligned to state standards as long as the overall system met the goals and intent of federal law. CCSSO strongly supported this Representative's effort. The final House and Senate versions of the letter were sent to the Conference Leaders. In addition to Rep. Langevin, signing onto the letters were Reps. Cardin (D-MD), Defazio (D-OR), Paul (R-TX), Oberstar (D-MN), Tubbs-Jones (D-OH), Baldacci (D-ME), Bereuter (R-NE), Bonior (D-MI), Dicks (D-WA), Rangel (D-NY), Crowley (D-NY), Wynn (D-MD), Maloney (D-NY), Morella (R-MD), Sanders (I-VT), Meehan (D-MA), Matsui (D-CA), Hinchey (D-NY), Kiezcka (D-WI), Cummings (D-MD), Ney (R-OH), Weiner (D-NY), Kanjorski (D-PA), Allen (D-ME), Kennedy (D-RI), Moran (R-KS), and Moore (D-KS). [Illinois supports state testing and did not seek signatures from members of the Illinois delegation.]

The House Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations FY02 committee mark-up will occur as of September 13th and thereafter. There are a few overall budget hearings already scheduled -- September 4 and 6, Senate Budget Hearing; September 5, House Budget; and the Senate HELP Committee Hearing for September 11th.

Information from the Committee on Education Funding

Given the declining surplus projections and rising political concerns about "tapping Social Security trust funds", pressure is building on appropriators to hold the line on spending increases. Without strong pressure from CEF members and grass-root efforts, funding increases for education are said to be in great jeopardy in FY02. Consider making contacts to your member of the Illinois delegation (link to them is on the left column of this page).

If you do call in, suggested talking points are:

• The President and Congress should provide appropriations for FY 02 that meet the expectations of the American people for improved education results. To move from the current two cents of each federal budget dollar for education toward a goal of at least five cents within five years requires an FY 02 increase of $12.5 billion.

• An increased federal investment in education is needed to maintain and expand existing programs that are successfully helping states and schools provide quality educational opportunities for all students.
Additional money is needed so schools can address new challenges, including record enrollments, shortages of qualified teachers, buildings and facilities in need of repair and modernization, and meet the needs of students with special needs.

Funding successful education and children's programs is a cost-effective investment in our nation's future economic and social well-being.

Reauthorization of IDEA

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), along with other disability groups that are members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities, met with Secretary Paige on August 27th to discuss the reauthorization of IDEA.

Rep. Boehner (R-OH), Chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee has published an article on the Committee's web site saying "Congress must meet its commitment to fully fund IDEA. But before full funding of IDEA can be mandated, Congress must first move to fix serious, systemic problems with IDEA that have led to the over-identification of minority youth as disabled or mentally retarded." Rep. Boehner has indicated that he does not support the inclusion of full funding for IDEA in the ESEA reauthorization bill now pending in Congress. The Committee’s web page can be found at http://edworkforce.house.gov/edwatch.

The National Campaign to Fully Fund IDEA, a grass-roots campaign created in the fall of 1999 in New Hampshire is continuing its quest to obtain 1 million signatures on a petition to fully fund IDEA. The petition is available on-line at www.ncffi.org/petition.asp. NASDSE has no connection to this organization but does support full funding for IDEA.

Charles Hoakanson, who recently edited the Fordham Foundation’s Rethinking Special Education for a New Century, has joined the staff of the House Education and Workforce Committee specifically to work on the reauthorization of IDEA. This report of May 2001 is available on the Foundation’s website at www.edexcellence.net.

At the summer National Governors Association meeting, the governors passed a resolution that states: "Governors support enactment of legislation that makes IDEA full funding a mandatory expenditure with incremental increases and eases the current federal restrictions for offsetting the costs to states for providing special education services. The governors also asked for Medicaid funds to pay for IDEA. "The Governors urge the Health Care Financing Administration to work with states to ensure that all school districts have access to Medicaid funds to cover the costs of providing IDEA health and related services by permitting school districts to use billing methods that are highly accountable, cost efficient, and meet the needs of children and school districts."

Illinois will be developing its own process for input on IDEA reauthorization--stay tuned.

Remarks by USDE Secretary Paige

The U. S. Department of Education (USDE) held a Learning Disabilities Summit on August 27, 2001. The keynote speaker was Secretary of Education Rod Paige. His remarks, in part and as they related to IDEA reauthorization, were:

"We have convened this summit because we want to hear from you. We want to listen to your ideas, hear your examples, understand your data, and know your concerns. We want to make sure that your voices are included in the formulation of policy and rules and assure the quality and usefulness of our research in the future...The second stage in the No Child Left Behind agenda is the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which is up for reauthorization next year. This Administration has worked closely with the Congress to map out a comprehensive reform of ESEA this year. The President and I will continue to work with Congress next year as we seek to bring about a comprehensive reform of IDEA. Children with disabilities served through IDEA deserve the same thorough review, the same deliberate attention, and the same significant reform."
President Bush and I will apply the same principles to IDEA that we did to ESEA. Accountability for results is just as important for all students with disabilities, including children who have learning disabilities. Flexibility and freedom from federal red tape can help school districts tailor their services to the needs of their students—something that has often eluded our special education policy under the current IDEA. Expanded parental options will help the parents of disabled children choose a format for services that fits their child's needs.

Finally, supporting teaching methods and procedures based on scientific research will ensure that we are doing what works for our children with disabilities. And that is why we have convened this summit and why your presence here today is important in bringing together experts in the field and in research to guide policy and improve results for all children with disabilities.

In addition to legislation like ESEA and IDEA, these values also guide our work and our policies at the Department of Education. In rulemaking, grant-making, interpretation of statutes, and every other activity, we are committed to ensuring that no child in America is left behind by a failing system.

One reason for this attention is that children with disabilities are among the children most in danger of being left behind. Indeed, they are the children most often left behind by our current system. Thus, they deserve our careful attention.

We should focus not on process but on results…not on compliance but on performance. We should measure success not by how many children we identify, but by how much they—and all children—learn. All parents have the right to expect high standards in education for their children. We can accept no less. This also means excuses are not good enough: we need results. It means orderly classrooms are not enough: we need results. It means rising average performance is not enough: we need to look at all children to ensure that they are learning.

Thanks to IDEA, children who were previously excluded from our schools are now sitting in classrooms alongside non-disabled peers, graduating from high school, and pursuing postsecondary education or productive employment. These are notable accomplishments. Yet, notwithstanding the progress we have made, there are still significant gaps between children with disabilities and their peers on such key indicators as graduation and student achievement.

We need to make sure teachers identify and address the abilities and disabilities of every child as early and accurately as possible. Evidence suggests that we know more about how to prevent reading problems. Tailoring our approach to children in kindergarten and the early grades is much more effective than trying to remediate later. Your research will help us with identification and with reading instruction.

When I talk about reforming IDEA, I am not speaking theoretically--I am speaking as a practitioner. I have experience with IDEA from my years as superintendent in Houston. I've seen how it often works against itself. I know there is no silver bullet that will suddenly make the system work smoothly. I know that substantial improvement will take substantial work. But I am committed to doing it right. And after the bill is finished …start working on turning the bill into practice and using what works, based on input from experts like you, to improve results for all students with disabilities.

In IDEA, as with ESEA, President Bush realizes that money is ineffective if it is not tied to accountability. Money alone will not improve student performance. Reform needs money, but money also needs reform. If he just wanted money, he wouldn't have bothered to ask a superintendent to be his Secretary of Education. He asked for me because he wanted reform, and reform is what he will get. We will take a systematic look at issues like discipline, finance models, disproportionate placement of minority students, over-identification, and late identification.

We all agree now that learning disabilities are a real and debilitating handicap that place children at considerable risk for academic failure and other problems. Because of this it is essential that we develop a genuine science of learning disabilities.
Let us commit ourselves to ensuring that students with learning disabilities—and, in fact, all students—will not be subjected to programs and policies that are based upon beliefs rather than data; on philosophies rather than proof of what works; on politically expedient policies based on flawed evidence. Let us commit ourselves to gathering the most accurate and useful data and bringing it to bear on our programs and methods.

Perhaps most important, we want your suggestions for more and better scientifically sound research to help us identify and address learning disabilities as early as possible. As we prepare for a major review of IDEA, we want to have the benefit of the latest science, the latest statistics, the latest impressions from parents and teachers and people who grew up with learning disabilities. We won't make everything perfect, but I am convinced we can make major improvements, in the law and the Department, and I intend to do everything we can.

In closing, I would like to enlist all of you in helping to examine how we think about children with learning disabilities. They are not burdens to our system, but fellow Americans. All students deserve to be held to the same high standards. They deserve our respect and our commitment to ensure they have improved opportunities. Respect for children means always asking more than we did yesterday. Respect for children means letting them risk failure. Respect for children means introducing them to reality.

By working together, by drawing on your research, by improving our legislation and our department and our practices, we can ensure that we hold all our students to the same high standards and that all of them produce the same positive results…"

As has been the tradition in recent years, the Secretary of Education gave a Back to School Speech. Secretary Paige addressed the National Press Club on September 4, 2001. His remarks in part are stated below (and can be found in full at http://www.ed.gov/Speeches/09-2001/010904.html). As ESEA reauthorization is on the table for September/October action, it is particularly timely.

"…Back-to-School time holds more in store for our students than sharp pencils and fresh paper. This is a time of promise and anticipation for the school year ahead. There is a lot to learn and much to achieve before the next summer vacation, and students and teachers are eager to get started. I have been visiting schools all across the country the last few days, and the energy is contagious.

As I waited for my confirmation hearing, I took the opportunity to become a student of the history of federal education legislation. Thirty-five years ago, another president from Texas, Lyndon Johnson, had a vision for reforming the federal role in education. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, known in this town as ESEA, was the result of that vision. This is the legislation that first carved out a significant role for the federal government in public education. Considered by President Johnson to be the key to his Great Society, ESEA made it the policy of the federal government to provide financial assistance through Title I to schools that served large numbers of disadvantaged students so they could receive additional instruction and assistance.

Over the past quarter of a century, the federal government has spent $125 billion of taxpayers' money on Title I alone. That's an impressive amount of money to help disadvantaged school districts to succeed at the things Title I was set up to do. But after all that spending, while there are pockets of excellence scattered across this country, overall, we have very little progress to show for it. Over the past decade, spending has skyrocketed, but student achievement at every level and in every subject barely budged. In some cases, it went down.

We know that schools and school districts will respond to categorical programs by building bureaucracy. I have seen this dynamic so many times that I am sure it is a law of nature. Instead, we must consolidate the small categorical programs that have been the trademark of Washington into larger, more flexible programs that emphasize service delivery. Talk to principals, especially those who get federal aid, and you will hear how much of their time is spent filling out redundant federal forms, trying to present their school the way they
expect people in Washington will want it to look. We need to free schools from federal red tape, and give school districts more flexibility from federal requirements so they can focus on improving building instruction rather than managing bureaucracy. Consolidating small and duplicative grant programs into larger and broader grants gives states and districts greater ability to meet the particular needs of their students. It also ensures that federal dollars are spent on activities that will improve student performance.

In the spring, both the House and Senate committees consolidated programs, but, as often happens, the number of programs proliferated on the floor of both chambers, especially the Senate. Instead of reducing the number of categorical programs to reduce bureaucracy in our schools and districts, the Senate passed 135 amendments to the bill—adding 29 new programs. [The conference committee] offers us another chance to consolidate programs and give schools real local control and flexibility. We must seize that opportunity for our students. Congress needs to cut down on these programs and give local schools room to achieve.

In exchange for flexibility, of course, we must demand accountability. Parents and taxpayers and community leaders and state officials all need to know which schools are succeeding, and why, and which schools are failing, and what can be done. And they need to have the power to act on this information. They need access to objective annual tests that are aligned to state standards for what children in each grade are expected to know and be able to do.

Let’s not kid ourselves about what we can achieve in Washington. The real reform, the real improvement, the real results, will occur in local schools, because the teachers and principals in those schools commit themselves to achieving results. They are the true engines of reform. That’s why I am in the middle of a three-week Back-to-School tour, to carry the message of accountability and results to communities across America.

The last thing I want to make sure of is that we give thorough reform to everyone. As you know, there is a disagreement about the best way to reform our services to children with disabilities. President Bush and I want to engage a systematic review of the Individuals with Disabilities [Education] Act so we can offer the promise of reform during the reauthorization process next year. Some have argued we should add more money through an amendment to the ESEA this year and would make that our issue. Our job is to make sure we make the issue service and research, not politics.

Thirty-five years after Lyndon Johnson started this effort, we’ve spent $147 billion dollars on federal government programs. Unfortunately, this investment didn’t come close to fulfilling its purpose. So we have to ask ourselves some questions. What is the federal role in education really doing for our children? How could we spend all this money and not win results? Why is it, after thirty-five years of federal involvement, that 70 percent of inner-city and rural fourth graders cannot read?

Until now, there have not been very satisfactory answers to those questions, but that is changing, because our culture of education is changing. We are starting to ask these questions of every school and every child, every year. We are starting to make the answers matter. We are starting to demand results, not excuses. We need to spread the message to every parent and every teacher, and what better place to do it than at the National Press Club. The message is that every child can learn. The message is that public schools are a public responsibility, and every member of the public should take that responsibility seriously. The message is that it’s time to stop making excuses and start measuring and producing results. The message is that it is time to stop funding failure. The message, finally, is that by following the principles of No Child Left Behind, all of us, working together, can create a culture in this country where parents have more choices, teachers have more resources, districts have more flexibility, everyone has more information, and, most important, no child is left behind.”

Reports of Interest
The Congressional Reporting Service has released a new report entitled Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Under the ESEA: Provisions, Issues, and Options Regarding House and Senate Versions of H.R. 1. The report was written by Wayne Riddle, Specialist in Education Finance at CRS. The report provides a good summary of the new AYP testing provisions in both bills, discusses options, and shows what effect these
provisions might have on the nation’s public education system. The report is available from the Library of Congress by requesting Order #RL31035, for the price of $7.95 for subscribers and $29.95 for non-subscribers.


The enrollment projections for elementary and secondary schools show considerable variation in growth across regions of the country. Between fall 1999 and fall 2011, enrollment is expected to rise by 8 percent in the West and about 1 percent in the South, but decline by 3 percent in the Midwest and 4 percent in the Northeast.

The number of public and private high school graduates is expected to reach 2.8 million in 2001-02, continuing a pattern of increases in recent years. Further growth is expected over the next 10 years, and the number of graduates is expected to reach 3.1 million in 2010-11, reflecting an 8 percent increase compared to 2001-02. This growth in high school graduates is expected to have considerable impact on college enrollment in subsequent years.

Expenditures for public elementary and secondary schools in 2001-02 are expected to total about $354 billion or about $7,487 per student. Based on various assumptions, per student spending is projected to increase about 24 percent in constant dollars between 2001-02 and 2010-11.

The Illinois Board of Higher Education issued a report in August entitled *Gateway to Success: Rethinking Access and Diversity for a New Century*, which recommends that the IBHE seek legislation requiring all high school students to take a *college-preparatory curriculum*. It is available at [http://www.ibhe.state.il.us/](http://www.ibhe.state.il.us/).

The American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) and National Governor's Association have issued a report entitled *A Vision of E-Learning for America’s Workforce*, which may be of interest to school personnel. While it speaks to workplace-related education and training, there are implications and links to P-16 programs and services. The report is available at [http://www.astd.org/virtual_community/public_policy/jh_ver.pdf](http://www.astd.org/virtual_community/public_policy/jh_ver.pdf).

The *33rd Annual Gallup Poll* by Phi Delta Kappa is now available. Among the key findings are:

- For the first time in the 33-year history of these polls, a majority of respondents assign either an A or a B grade to the schools in their communities.
- Public support for vouchers (34%) dropped 5 points from last year and 10 points from the 1997 and 1998 high of 44%.
- Only half of the respondents have heard or read about charter schools. When given a brief description of them, a small plurality expressed disapproval.
- 41% think homeschooling is a "good thing." In 1985, support was only 16%.
- 67% disapprove of allowing students to earn high school credits over the Internet without attending a regular school.
- Public opposition is growing to having private companies run entire schools -- 72% opposition, up from 59% in 1996.
- The public identifies lack of school funding and lack of discipline as the two biggest problems facing public schools.
- 68% say that money makes a big difference in the quality of education. 59% and 57% respectively believe that the quality of education and spending levels vary greatly in their state.
- 49% think President Bush will do a better job of school improvement than President Clinton.
- Rating government officials reform efforts in the ’90s:
  - 46% gave their governor an A or B
40% gave President Clinton an A/B
39% gave their state legislature A/B
30% gave Congress A/B

President Bush' education reforms:
- 55% support increased use of standardized tests
- 75% support holding schools accountable
- 77% support greater state authority in use of federal funds
- Mixed and somewhat contradictory public opinions on testing

Standardized testing:
- 31% thinks there is too much emphasis
- 22% think there is not enough emphasis
- 44% think there is just the right amount of emphasis

High-stakes testing:
- 53% favor a single test to determine grade promotion, 45% opposed
- 57% in favor, 42% opposed for single test to determine high school diploma
- 66% believe standardized testing should guide instruction while 30% think tests should measure student learning.
- 65% think student achievement should be measured by class work, while only 31% think it should rely on testing.

79% think minority students have equal educational opportunities; 73% believe the achievement gap between white and minority students is related to factors other than schooling; and 55% believe it is the schools' responsibility to see that it is closed.

The public is concerned about the teacher shortage but 82% reject lowering state requirements for teacher training; 67% oppose permitting persons with bachelor's degrees to become teachers without preparation in teacher education.

Copies of the published version of the report are available, 25 for $15, from Phi Delta Kappa International, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, Indiana, 47402--0789 (800/766-1156).

On January 29, 2001, President Bush issued Executive Order 13198, creating Centers for Faith-Based & Community Initiatives in five cabinet departments -- Health and Human Services (HHS), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Education (ED), Labor (DOL), and Justice (DOJ). The Executive Order charged each Center to conduct: a department-wide audit to identify all existing barriers to the participation of faith-based and other community organizations in the delivery of social services by the department, including but not limited to regulations, rules, orders, procurement, and other internal policies and practices, and outreach activities that either facially discriminate against or otherwise discourage or disadvantage the participation of faith-based and other community organizations in Federal programs.

This recent report, Unlevel Playing Field: Barriers to Participation by Faith-Based and Community Organizations in Federal Social Service Programs, summarizes the initial findings from the five cabinet Centers on barriers impeding religious and grass-roots organizations from accessing funding. The full report is available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/08/unlevelfield2.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/08/unlevelfield2.html). In USDE's analysis, 2% of award recipients in six major program areas were faith-based community groups.

Barriers identified in the report, and some USDE examples, are outlined below. Due to time constraints, the Centers emphasized programs that receive major funding, programs that are covered by existing Charitable Choice laws, programs characteristic of the respective departments, and programs in which participation by faith-based and other community-serving groups would be natural or especially fruitful. The barriers noted are:

A. Barriers to Faith-Based Organizations Seeking Federal Support
- Barrier 1: A Pervasive Suspicion About Faith-Based Organizations
Barrier 2: Faith-Based Organizations Excluded from Funding. This problem occurs with USDE's "Even Start Family Literacy Program" which gives formula grants to States to fund local partnerships between schools and other local entities, including nonprofit organizations. The authorizing statute does not exclude religious nonprofit organizations. However, USDE states that "pervasively sectarian" organizations may not be directly funded by government. They can become part of a federally-funded partnership only if they are subordinate to "nonsectarian" partners. Other Department staff, while not ruling out funding for "pervasively sectarian" organizations in general, believe that eligibility can only be established after a case-by-case assessment of a group's religious character.

Barrier 3: Excessive Restrictions on Religious Activities. Head Start programs are often located in houses of worship that are sometimes locally pressured to remove or cover up religious art, symbols, and other items, although there is no such requirement in the statute, regulations, or official HHS guidance.

Barrier 4: Inappropriate Expansion of Religious Restrictions to New Programs

Barrier 5: Denial of Faith-Based Organizations' Established Right to Take Religion Into Account in Employment Decisions

Barrier 6: Thwarting Charitable Choice: Congress' New Provision for Supporting Faith-based Organizations. It clarifies and codifies the right of faith-based groups to participate by clearing away misperceptions and doubts about whether religious groups may deliver Federally-funded social services;

B. Barriers to Community-Based Organizations and Other Small and Newcomer Organizations

Barrier 7: The Limited Accessibility of Federal Grants Information

Barrier 8: The Heavy Weight of Regulations and Other Requirements

Barrier 9: Requirements to Meet Before Applying for Support

Barrier 10: The Complexity of Grant Applications and Grant Agreements. USDE has prepared a user-friendly, non-technical explanation of its discretionary grants application process, a 33-page document. However, the guide emphasizes that applicants must not rely on it as their sole source of information and it directs them to the department's general regulations-some 300 pages of legal details.

Barrier 11: Questionable Favoritism for Faith-Based Organizations

Barrier 12: An Improper Bias in Favor of Previous Grantees

Barrier 13: An Inappropriate Requirement to Apply in Collaboration with Likely Competitors. USDE's GEAR UP program (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) and two bilingual education programs limit eligibility for grants to nongovernmental groups that can demonstrate a partnership with the local education authority-which may, be unwilling to work with a qualified community-based or faith-based organization.

Barrier 14: Requiring Formal 501(c)(3) Status without Statutory Authority

Barrier 15: Inadequate Attention to Faith-Based and Community Organizations in the Federal Grants Streamlining Process

In conclusion, the report says no faith-based service group has an automatic right to obtain Federal funding either through direct discretionary grants or through State and local governments' provision of Federal formula grants. Similarly, community-based organizations have no automatic right to Federal funding. But both faith-based and community organizations should have an equal opportunity to obtain such funding, if they choose to seek it.

USDE, as reported in Education Daily recently, plans to take specific action to address the situation. These steps include publishing notices of grant opportunities in venues read by faith and community groups, enlisting higher education institutions to assist in providing technical assistance to these groups; and holding regional seminars to train new grantees about USDE application procedures. More information on this report and resolution of the barriers is available from USDE's Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives at 202/401-0003.