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Public Education Policy And Progress



U.S. SENATORS HARKIN AND ENZI RELEASE DRAFT LANGUAGE TO REVISE NCLB: Senate Committee to Consider Draft Containing Important Provisions for Nation's High Schools

On October 11, **U.S. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee (HELP) Committee**, released draft legislation to revise the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), currently known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The legislation reflects ten months of bipartisan negotiations between Harkin and **Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), top Republican on the HELP Committee**.

“This opportunity is the result of more than two years of hearings, debate, and negotiations,” [said Harkin](#). “Through this bipartisan effort, we have produced legislation that represents an important step forward for our children, our schools, and our nation. ... This compromise demonstrates that Congressional Democrats and Republicans can overcome partisan differences in the interest of progress, and I look forward to support from my Committee colleagues on both sides of the aisle as we build on this foundation.”

“More than a year ago, members on both sides of the aisle agreed on the nine biggest problems with No Child Left Behind that needed to be fixed—and we set out to find solutions,” [Enzi said](#). “This is not a perfect bill, nor does it solve every education issue. But it will make a huge, positive difference to our nation’s young people.”

In a [letter to Enzi and Harkin](#), **Bob Wise, president of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia**, noted that the 860-page draft bill is “particularly important for the nation’s high schools,” which, Wise said, are an “afterthought” in NCLB. He noted that NCLB does not require an accurate calculation of graduation rates and provides few resources for low-income high schools. Specifically, Wise pointed out that only 10 percent of Title I funding goes to high schools, although high schools educate nearly one-quarter of the low-income students that Title I is targeted to help.

The draft legislation would address these issues by establishing a common, accurate definition of graduation rates and would concentrate improvement efforts on high schools with graduation rates below 60 percent. Additionally, the draft legislation would support comprehensive efforts by states to improve the reading and writing skills of all students, including middle and high school students. It also would support the effort underway in nearly every state to raise standards and ensure that students graduate from high school ready for college and a career. The legislation would largely keep NCLB’s testing system in place, including the requirement that states report information on specific subgroups of students (low-income students, English language learners, students in special education, students of color, etc.), but it would eliminate the 2013–14 deadline for 100 percent proficiency in reading and math.

In addition to its proposed changes for high schools, the draft legislation is drawing a lot of attention for its elimination of the Adequate Yearly Progress requirements found in NCLB. Instead, states would have to ensure that all students are making “continuous improvement.” The draft legislation would require states to identify the elementary, middle, and high schools in the bottom 5 percent of performance—including high schools with graduation rates below 60 percent—and implement one of six turnaround strategies in those schools.

The provision has received criticism from organizations representing students with disabilities, low-income students, and students of color, including the National Council of La Raza, the Education Trust, and the National Center for Learning Disabilities. These organizations are calling for “meaningful” student improvement instead of the “continuous” improvement the draft legislation would require.

“States would not have to set measurable achievement and progress targets or even graduation rate goals,” the organizations wrote in a [letter](#) to Harkin and Enzi. “The loss of goals and progress targets would dismantle the positive aspects of NCLB’s accountability system and be a significant step backward that we can ill afford to take.”

In his letter to Harkin and Enzi, Wise called the focus on the lowest-performing schools, “logical—especially when resources are scarce,” but noted that nearly 200,000 students of color drop out of high schools with graduation rates above 60 percent. “Federal law should help to ensure that these students have the opportunity to attend high-quality schools as well,” he wrote.

Harkin said that he wanted to keep achievement targets in the bill but dropped them in an effort to keep the bill bipartisan and draw support from Senate Republicans.

Another potential lightning rod in the draft legislation is its treatment of teacher evaluations. In its current form, the legislation would require states to create teacher evaluation systems with input from educators. According to [Education Week’s “Politics K–12” blog](#), these systems would have four different categories for teacher evaluations and would have to be informed by student outcomes, as well as classroom observations. Evaluations would then be used for professional development, but they would not necessarily be used to determine hiring and firing.

The next step for the legislation is a [HELP Committee markup on Wednesday, October 19 at 10:00 a.m., EST](#). During the markup, HELP Committee members will consider amendments to the draft legislation. Whether the product that emerges from the HELP Committee will make it to the Senate floor for consideration is still up in the air, although Harkin hopes the bill will reach the Senate floor before Thanksgiving.

“I’m hopeful that if we can get a good bipartisan bill through [the HELP] committee and the [Senate] floor, then that will be instructive for the House,” Harkin said. “If the House takes a strictly partisan approach to this, well, then I guess we’re doomed.”

The complete text of the draft legislation is available at <http://help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/ROM118313.pdf>.

Nearly 75 Percent of States Plan to Request Waivers from No Child Left Behind Requirements

Thirty-seven states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have notified the U.S. Department of Education (the department) of their intent to seek waivers from specific requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). According to the [plan President Obama outlined on September 23](#), states will receive flexibility from specific provisions of the law in exchange for state-led reform efforts to close achievement gaps, evaluate teachers and principals, promote rigorous accountability, and ensure that all students are on track to graduate ready for college and a career.

Based on a [document](#) released by the department, seventeen states say they would request a waiver by November 14, while eighteen states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico say they would request a waiver by mid-February. Connecticut and Oregon notified the department of their intent to request a waiver but have yet to determine a date by which they will submit their request. The department will review requests received by November 14 in December, while requests submitted in February will be reviewed in the spring. Because a state's indication of its intent to request a waiver is nonbinding, a state may decide not to request a waiver.

While discussing the draft legislation to rewrite NCLB released on October 11, Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) said the proposed legislation was preferable to waivers because it would hold all states to the same expectations rather than the case-by-case scenario that the waiver process offers.

For more information on the waiver process, including a table showing which states have applied for waivers, visit <http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility>.



WHAT'S THE SCENARIO?: U.S. Department of Education Releases Additional Details on Fiscal Year 2012 Funding Levels

Earlier this month, the U.S. Department of Education (the department) made available a table showing proposed funding levels in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 for all programs under its jurisdiction based on three scenarios: (1) President Obama's budget request; (2) the [Labor, Health and Human Services \(HHS\), and Education appropriations bill](#) that passed the Senate Appropriations Committee on September 21; and (3) the [draft Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill](#) released by the House Appropriations Committee on September 29.

As shown in the box to the right, discretionary funding (excluding Pell Grants) for the department would increase under the president's budget and the Senate plan and decline slightly under the House plan.

Among individual programs, funding for Title I would stay the same under the Senate plan but increase by \$1 billion in the House plan. Funding for special education would essentially stay the same in the Senate plan and increase by \$1.2 billion under the House plan. The Senate would provide \$534.5 million for School Improvement Grants, which target the nation's lowest-performing schools; \$183 million for the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program; and \$48.9 million for the High School Graduation Initiative. The House would eliminate funding for all three programs.

Discretionary Funding Levels for the U.S. Department of Education

FY11 Enacted: **\$45.39 billion**

FY12:

President's Budget: **\$48.8 billion***

Senate Appropriations Committee: **\$45.47 billion***

House Appropriations Committee: **\$45.28 billion***

*Proposed

Because Congress has yet to enact final appropriations bills for the department, funding levels for education programs in FY 2012 remain up in the air. Currently, the department, as well as the rest of the federal government, is funded by a temporary mechanism called a continuing resolution (CR) that runs until November 18. Between now and November 18, Congress could roll several appropriation bills into separate “minibuses” as substitutes for a giant omnibus bill that would include all twelve appropriations bills. Alternatively, it could pass another continuing resolution that will extend the November 18 CR deadline.

Proposed funding levels for all education programs based on the three scenarios listed above are available at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget12/12action.pdf>.



EDUCATION FOR TOMORROW’S JOBS: New Legislation Would Combine Rigorous College Prep with Workplace Experience

On October 12, **U.S. Representatives Glenn Thompson (R-PA) and Judy Chu (D-CA) and Senator Bob Casey (D-PA)** introduced the Education for Tomorrow’s Jobs Act, which would combine rigorous college preparation with workplace experience in an effort to improve student engagement, academic achievement, and success after high school. The legislation is under consideration as part of the ongoing effort in Congress to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, currently known as the No Child Left Behind Act.

“The Education for Tomorrow’s Jobs Act is about American competitiveness—an integrated approach to education that will bolster student achievement, graduation rates, college readiness and career readiness, while securing our nation’s technical job base so that we can remain globally competitive,” [Thompson said](#). “We have seen the harmful effects of Washington’s education mandates and this bill will allow schools to put forth the framework to ensure students have both the knowledge and skills to graduate high school ready to succeed in college and careers, and live up to the fullest extent of their individual potential.”

The legislation encourages the use of federal funds to support Linked Learning, a high school reform strategy in place throughout California that links demanding technical education with real-world experience in a wide range of high-growth occupations, such as engineering, arts and media, biomedicine, and health. Linked Learning makes the high school experience more relevant and engaging, and evidence suggests that Linked Learning students are more likely to go on to postsecondary education.

“I’m proud to reintroduce a bipartisan bill that promotes the Linked Learning approach to high school improvement that has shown dramatic results in California,” [Chu said](#). “By showing students the connection between school and the workplace through partnerships in high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand industries such as engineering or digital media, we can increase high school graduation rates, raise college attendance rates, and improve jobs prospects for students. The Education for Tomorrow’s Jobs Act will modernize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to meet the needs of our changing economy and workforce.”

Under the legislation, school districts in partnership with local stakeholders—including businesses, unions, parent organizations, and other community members—would implement a

system of pathway schools around career themes designated as high-pay, high-growth, and high-skill industries. Students would be exposed to four key components, including a rigorous academic core aligned to the state's postsecondary requirements; career and technical education; work-based learning; and supplemental services.

“In today's knowledge-based economy, the high school diploma is no longer the end point; it's the jumping off point,” said **Alliance for Excellent Education President Bob Wise**. “By connecting strong academics, demanding technical education and real-world experience in a wide range of high-growth occupations, such as engineering, arts and media, biomedicine, and health, the Linked Learning approach helps to eliminate the gap between what students learn in the classroom and what they learn on the job. The end results are high school graduates who are better prepared to succeed in college and a career and employers who are more satisfied with their workers.”

More information on the Education for Tomorrow's Jobs Act is available at http://www.all4ed.org/federal_policy/legislative_updates/education_tomorrow_s_jobs_act.



GOV. BOB WISE ANNOUNCES DIGITAL LEARNING DAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2012: First National Day Around Digital Learning to Be Focused on Personalized Learning and Effective Teaching

Building upon a growing movement, the Alliance for Excellent Education, and its partners are calling on teachers, schools, principals, community leaders, parents, and students to participate in the first-ever national **Digital Learning Day on February 1, 2012**. Digital Learning Day will celebrate innovative teaching practices that make learning more personalized and engaging and encourage exploration of how digital learning can provide more students with more opportunities to get the skills they need to succeed in college, a career, and life.

Bob Wise, president of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia, made the Digital Learning Day announcement during an October 12 appearance on CNN's "Piers Morgan Tonight" with **Jeb Bush, president of the Foundation for Excellence in Education and former governor of Florida**. Watch [video](#) from the appearance by clicking on the image to the right.



On October 13, Wise provided additional details on Digital Learning Day at the Foundation for Excellence in Education's 2011 Excellence in Action National Summit on Education Reform.

“Digital Learning Day is more than just a day,” said Wise. “It is about building a digital learning movement that provides teachers with better tools to truly provide a quality education for every child. The use of technology has made nearly everything in modern life more efficient, accessible, richer, and faster. It is hard to imagine modern life without the rapid innovations that have boosted productivity, created jobs, and changed daily life, yet education remains largely

untouched by the power of technology in the classroom and particularly in teaching and learning.”

Wise noted, “simply layering on technology alone will not move the education needle very much.” He said that digital learning “erases the line between high tech *or* high teach” and stressed that the nation must have both—high tech *and* high teach to truly prepare all students for the global economy.

“Digital learning gives teachers more opportunities to personalize education, utilize data and content more efficiently, and be more innovative in their teaching to ensure all students meet today’s challenging standards,” Wise said.



Initial support for Digital Learning Day comes from leading content and technology companies including Google, Intel Corporation, SMART Technologies, Epsilen, GlobalScholar, and Pearson Foundation. Additional partners in Digital Learning Day include Carnegie Corporation of New York and nearly twenty leading national organizations representing educators, leaders, and the best in thinking about educational technology and learning, as well as an advisory group of twenty-five educators.

As part of Digital Learning Day, the Alliance and its partners will make customized toolkits available for all audiences, grades, and subjects to help every individual and organization involved think about how they can contribute to the campaign. Teachers, principals, students, leaders, parents, and communities are invited to visit www.DigitalLearningDay.org to register to receive toolkits, resources, and invitations to run-up events and activities. Mark your calendar for Digital Learning Day on February 1, 2012 and help spread the word through Facebook or on Twitter with the dedicated hashtag, [#DLDay](https://twitter.com/DLDay).

Read Wise’s complete remarks at http://www.all4ed.org/press_room/press_releases/10132011b.



EDUCATION AT A GLANCE: New OECD Report Finds That Education Pays in the United States More So Than in Most Countries

An individual with a college degree earns 79 percent more than a person with only a high school education in the United States, the sixth-highest “wage premium” among the thirty-four countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and significantly higher than the OECD average of 50 percent.¹ This is one of the key findings from *Education at a Glance 2011: OECD Indicators*. The report also finds that the penalty for not completing high school is highest in the United States—someone who has not completed high school can only expect to receive 64 percent of a high school graduate’s earnings, compared to the OECD average of 77 percent.

¹ The thirty-four member nations of the OECD include many of the world’s most advanced countries, as well as emerging countries, and consist of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States.

“The cost to individuals and society of young people leaving school without a qualification keeps rising,” said **OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría**. “We must avoid the risk of a lost generation by all means. Despite strained public budgets, governments must keep up their investment to maintain quality in education, especially for those most at risk. Investment in education is not only about money, it’s also an investment in people and an investment in the future.”

According to the report, the additional taxes and social contributions paid by a college-educated man during his working life is more than \$190,000 in the United States—the highest among OECD nations and well above the OECD average of \$91,000.² Among college-educated women in the United States, the net gain (\$90,000) is also well above the OECD average (\$55,000).

The report also finds that the economic recession has disproportionately affected individuals with less education in the United States. Specifically, unemployment rates for those without a high school education increased to 15.8 percent in 2009 in the United States, more than 4 percentage points above the OECD average. Meanwhile, unemployment rates have stayed below 5 percent for college graduates, one-half of a percentage point above the OECD average. “The job market in the United States is particularly difficult for those without a college degree,” the OECD notes. “Higher-educated individuals have fared substantially better in this recession and face a job market that is no worse, on average, than in other OECD countries.”

Even with the tremendous economic and employment benefits associated with higher education in the United States, the nation continues to lag its OECD counterparts in the percentage of individuals with a college degree. Although the United States, at 41 percent, still ranks among the top five countries in the OECD in the percentage of the population with a college degree, it ranks fifteenth among thirty-four OECD countries among twenty-five- to thirty-four-year-olds. As a result, the United States is the only OECD nation where attainment levels among those just entering the labor market (twenty-five- to thirty-four-year-olds) do not exceed those about to leave the labor market (fifty-five to sixty-four-year-olds), the report finds.

The OECD’s briefing note for the United States is available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/7/32/48685294.pdf>. The complete report, which contains findings for every country in the OECD, is available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/61/2/48631582.pdf>.

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, 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>.

² To determine the net public return, the OECD juxtaposes the benefits of attaining higher levels of education (taxes, social contributions, social transfers, and the probability of finding work by educational level) against the costs (public and private direct costs, as well as foregone earnings while in school, adjusted for the probability of finding work, and for foregone taxes, social contributions, and social transfers).