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Hot Topics

CBPP Report: Nearly All States to Spend Less in 2012 than 2008

Forty-four states have released their budget data and 35 of them plan to spend less in 2012, after inflation, than they did in 2008, says a [report](#) from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Total proposed spending would be 9.4 percent below 2008 inflation-adjusted levels. Thirty-nine states propose major cuts to core public services, including Texas, which would eliminate pre-K for more than 40 percent of pre-K pupils (despite having \$8 billion in reserves). Eight states with budget shortfalls have large reserves they could use but so far only Nebraska plans to do so.

California Budget Legislation Cuts Early Ed

California Governor Jerry Brown signed budget legislation that made significant cuts to early care and education. The reductions include a 15 percent across the board funding decrease to all subsidy programs, which will impact child development programs across California, including the state preschool program. In addition to other reductions, the legislation decreases to the Standard Reimbursement Rate (SRR) by up to 10 percent, which will also impact early learning programs.

Studies: Does Too Much Direct Teaching in Pre-K Limit Kids' Curiosity?

Two studies to be published in the journal *Cognition* suggest that direct teaching of young children can constrain children's curiosity, exploration and discovery. Both studies, one from UC Berkeley, and one from MIT, employed toys children had never seen that were engineered to perform various functions. In groups where teachers said they didn't know how to make them work, the kids figured out how to make them perform more functions than kids in groups where teachers taught them how to perform some functions and then left the kids on their own. Alison Gopnik, lead researcher in the UC study, discusses the issues, including where direct teaching is appropriate, in an [article](#) she wrote for *Slate*.

Immigrant Children: Are We Creating a Permanent Underclass?

"If the high dropout rates and low educational achievement of Latino youth are not turned around we will have created a permanent underclass without hope of integrating into the mainstream." That stark quote from Patricia Gandara, UCLA, and Frances Contreras, University of Washington, appears in the new [issue](#) of *The Future of Children* and pretty well sums up why the Spring 2011 edition is dedicated to "The Future of Immigrant Children." Authors Ron Haskins, Brookings Institution, and Marta Tienda, Princeton University, say three policy reforms would markedly improve the situation: Increased attendance at quality preschool, improved instruction in English, and increased attendance in postsecondary education.

New Rules Proposed for Head Start Eligibility Determination Procedures

A new Obama administration [proposal filed in the Federal Register](#) would strengthen procedures for determining eligibility for Head Start and Early Head Start. Persons seeking

services would be required to certify in a signed and dated statement that the information provided is accurate. Program staff making eligibility determinations would also have to certify in a signed and dated statement that the information is accurate to the best of their knowledge. Agencies would have to establish procedures describing actions to be taken against staff who violate eligibility determination requirements. The rule is seen as a response to a GAO investigation finding fraud at some Head Start programs.

In this week's *Preschool Matters ... Today!* [blog post](#), a frustrated mom describes her experience, pointing out why reform is needed.

Two New Videos from Strategies for Children

Blogger Irene Sege tells us Strategies for Children, the Massachusetts Advocacy group has two new and informative videos on its web site. One [video features an early educator](#) who went back to school to earn her BA in which she describes the differences it has made in her teaching. The other traces a [child's path to literacy](#) from birth to third grade. You can catch [Irene's blog](#) at Eye on Early Education.

IES Will Host FY 2012 Funding Opportunities Webinar Series

The National Center for Special Education Research and the National Center for Education Research within the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) will host a series of webinars related to 2012 research funding opportunities beginning in April. For more information (Basic Overview, Grant Writing Workshop, and Application Process), see <http://ies.ed.gov/funding/webinars/>.

Calendar

Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Conference

April 15, 2011 - April 16, 2011

Denver, CO -- This regional conference will offer workshops covering early childhood education topics relevant to teachers, administrators, researchers, health professionals, and policymakers.

Lecture: Improving Impacts of Classrooms: Professional Development and Classroom Observation

April 19, 2011

New Brunswick, NJ – The latest in the Foundation for Child Development Lecture Series will feature Dr. Robert Pianta of the University of Virginia.

2011 National Smart Start Conference

May 2, 2011 - May 5, 2011

Greensboro, NC – The National Smart Start Conference is hailed as the nation's largest conference devoted to early education systems and strategies.

Leadership Connections 2011

May 12, 2011 - May 14, 2011

Wheeling, IL – The Leadership Connections conference is a professional development opportunity designed for teachers, administrators, family child care providers, trainers, and consultants.

Lecture: The Education Reform Our Public Schools and Students Need

May 12, 2011

New Brunswick, NJ – Benjamin Todd Jealous, president and CEO of the NAACP, will give the Second Annual Education Justice lecture at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Public Policy and Planning at 4:00 p.m., May 12, 2011.

CAYL Institute 2011 National Principals Conference

July 10, 2011 - July 13, 2011

Orlando, FL – The CAYL Institute will hold its third national conference for elementary school principals in Orlando, Florida.

Early Education News Roundup

April 1, 2011 (Sioux City Journal, Sioux City, IA)

State board asks Branstad to keep universal preschool

State Board of Education members asked Gov. Terry Branstad on Thursday to find a way to keep the state's universal preschool program intact, calling it an investment in the future with support across the state. The governor said free preschool, estimated to cost \$70 million statewide this year, is a program the state simply can't afford.

March 30, 2011 (*The Tennessean*)

[Conflicting studies muddle debate on effectiveness of pre-K](#)

Although the studies use different methodology and approached the program from different directions, they came to basically the same conclusion. Prekindergarten is doing what it's supposed to do. Where the studies differ is on just how dramatically the program can improve those children's performance in school.

March 25, 2011 (*Billings Gazette, Billings, MT*)

[Head Start parents urge lawmakers to preserve funding](#)

Head Start is all about education, and Dan DeBolt thinks Congress needs to be educated about the benefits of the preschool program. DeBolt and a handful of other Head Start parents visited the Billings offices of all three members of Montana's congressional delegation Thursday, urging them to vote against proposed cuts of up to \$1 billion in Head Start nationwide.

March 23, 2011 (*Tulsa World*)

[Editorial: Early childhood education gets boost from business leaders](#)

One thing Oklahoma does right is its attention to early childhood education, long recognized as an economic development engine as well as the right thing to do for children. In these perilous economic times, with one program after another being slashed, it's important that the state not lose ground in preparing its youngest residents.

March 23, 2011 (*The Fayetteville Observer, Fayetteville, NC*)

[Editorial: Smarter - Boosters need plan to save preschool programs](#)

Fortunately, the state has many resources to provide it, especially the Smart Start and More at Four programs that have been remarkably successful and often copied by other states. But our early-education programs are an endangered species as the General Assembly seeks ways to close a \$2.4 billion budget gap.

March 22, 2011 (*The Telegraph, Alton, IL*)

[District playing it safe, cuts pre-K program](#)

With funding no longer guaranteed by the state, the Roxana School District has opted for a fiscally conservative stance by at least temporarily cutting its pre-kindergarten program next year.

Resources

MetLife Survey of the American Teacher

This [survey](#) conducted by Harris Interactive each year since 1984, explores teachers' opinions and brings them to the attention of educators, policy makers and the public. The findings are being released in two reports: Part 1: Clearing the Path examines the importance of being college- and career-ready, what this level of preparation includes, and what it may take to get there. Part 2: Teaching Diverse Learners looks at differences in student needs, how teachers address them and how well students feel their needs are being met.

Across the Great Divide: Perspectives of CEOs and College Presidents on America's Higher Education and Skills Gap

This [report](#) from Civic Enterprises looks at the career readiness. A Hart Research Associates survey shows that more than half of business leaders say they face a "fairly major" challenge in recruiting non-managerial employees with the skills, training and education their companies need despite high unemployment. It provides a blueprint for reform that includes integrating work and learning as well as more cooperation between businesses and educational institutions.

Education as a Data-Driven Enterprise

This [report](#) from the Alliance for Excellent Education, Civic Enterprises, and the Data Quality Campaign says that better information sharing by education stakeholders can accelerate their efforts to boost student achievement. It says that while more data on student progress is being produced these days, it is often not shared and/or arrives too late. Moreover, many lack the training to use it.

Building a Grad Nation

This [report](#) from Civic Enterprises, Johns Hopkins University, America's Promise Alliance, and the Alliance for Excellent Education examines national progress and challenges in reducing the number of dropout factories. It says there were 112 fewer dropout factories in 2009 than 2008 but that 1,634 remain. It proposes a "Civic Marshall Plan" to remedy the situation.

Every Child Matters Video: Make Children a National Budget Priority

As Congress continues budget deliberations, Every Child Matters Education Fund President Michael Petit makes a case for investing in children in this [video from ECM](#).

Submit information items to painsworth@nieer.org

The National Institute for Early Education Research supports the development of early childhood education policy with objective, nonpartisan information based on rigorous research. The Institute is co-directed by Dr. W. Steven Barnett and Dr. Ellen C. Frede at Rutgers University.

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