



The Learning Disabilities Association of Maine

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Friends of LDA of Maine,

Here is our E-NEWS for December, which we hope you will find both informative and useful. We update our web site weekly with new information and resources to serve you, our customer, so check often for educational news and resources on learning and attention disabilities.

If you have an item about learning or attention disabilities that you believe may be helpful to others, please let us know.

Thank you!

DISCLAIMER: Any information or list provided by us is non inclusive and does not imply an endorsement or recommendation of LDA-ME; we encourage readers to do that for themselves.

LIST SERVE: Please advise us at anytime if you wish to be removed from our "Friends of LDA-ME" list serve.

E-NEWS from LDA of Maine for December

Dear Family and Friends,

It is with deep sadness that we forward you the sad news of the loss of Sally Smith who was a true inspiration to all who had the privilege to know her and her work:

Sunday, December 2, 2007

To The Lab School Community

It is with profound sadness that I write to tell you that Sally Smith passed away last night in the hospital in Baltimore. Anyone who knew Sally was made richer by that knowledge. She was a mentor, inspiration and friend to so many. This is a tremendous loss for us all. I have known Sally since I was a boy. She was

always larger than life - a giant splash of color and motion, a playful twinkle in her eye and an obvious love of all that was around her. Those animals that Sally loved so much, the dragon and giraffe and Technicolor lizard, are crying today. And so are we.

Sally Smith built a remarkable institution in the Lab School of Washington and Baltimore Lab and it is an institution that is remarkably strong. As I mentioned in my note last week, the quality and commitment of our faculty and staff is second-to-none. We are lucky. Sally has taught them well and we all will do well now. Sally would expect nothing less.

When I assumed the Chairmanship of Lab's Board last July, Sally was very clear with me about who to engage in the event that she was ever unable to run the school and the Board of Trustees has a plan in place to ensure the continuity of Lab's operations. In accordance with that plan, it gives great confidence to announce that Sally Seawright has assumed the position of Acting Director of the Lab School of Washington and Baltimore Lab. An experienced Lab hand, Sally Seawright was, until June of this year, the Coordinator of the Washington campus's Junior High program for 13 years. Not only is she a gifted educator, she understands the very passion and soul that makes Lab the special place that it is. There is no better person to guide the school forward in the coming days and months. Sally Seawright will be on campus on tomorrow (Monday).

Sally Smith's family is still making plans for a funeral and memorial service. We will, of course, share them with you once we know more.

With great sadness,

Rob

Robert F. Mathias
Chair
Board of Trustees
Lab School of Washington and Baltimore Lab

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SENATE NOT CONSIDERING NEW EDUCATION LAW

Associated Press -- November 2, 2007
by Nancy Zuckerbrod

Washington -- The top two lawmakers on the Senate Education Committee are putting off consideration of a new No Child Left Behind law until next year, congressional aides said Friday.

Sens. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., and Mike Enzi, R-Wyo., have decided that there's not enough time this year to complete work on the legislation, which has not yet been formally introduced.

The five-year-old law, up for a scheduled rewrite, requires math and reading tests in grades three through eight, and once in high school. Schools that miss testing benchmarks face increasingly stiff sanctions. The law, originally passed in 2001, is among President Bush's top domestic policy priorities.

Kennedy, the panel's chairman, had previously said he wanted a bill before the Senate this year. He now is aiming, however, to bring a bill up for consideration early next year, the aides said. They spoke on condition of anonymity because negotiations over the content of the legislation are ongoing and sensitive.

It may be even more difficult to pass a rewritten No Child bill next year because it is a presidential election year. It is harder to get the bipartisan consensus needed to pass major legislation against the backdrop of an intense presidential campaign.

House lawmakers have not decided whether to keep trying to bring a bill to the floor in what little time is left in this calendar year. They, too, say time is running out.

“It is growing less likely that we will get a bill off the House floor in 2007,” said Tom Kiley, a spokesman for Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., the chairman of the House education committee. “We continue to work hard on the bill. Discussions with Republicans and education organizations continue.”

Lawmakers in both parties - along with the Bush administration - are pushing for important revisions to the law. If the law isn't revised by Congress, the existing law stands.

There is broad agreement that the law should be changed to encourage schools to measure individual student progress over time instead of using snapshot comparisons of certain grade levels.

There is consensus, as well, that the law should be changed so that schools that miss progress goals by a little don't face the same consequences as schools that miss them by a lot.

Deep divisions remain over some proposed changes, including merit pay for teachers and whether schools should be judged based on test scores in subjects other than reading and math.

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Make sure to check out the EVENTS page of our website for upcoming conferences and workshops! The page is updated regularly.

<http://www.ldame.org/events.html>

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TEACHER EDUCATOR STIPENDS available for the 12th year.

The stipends support attendance at the **2008 International Conference** of the Learning Disabilities Association of America in Chicago, Illinois, February 27, 2008. Two-person teams must include one faculty member who trains teachers to work with children with learning disabilities and one who teaches general education courses taken by those teachers. Both must be from the same institution. The six selected teams can be reimbursed for airfare, lodging, meal, and parking expenses up to \$1,000 per team. Registration and Banquet fees are waived.

The Wednesday morning **Teacher Educator Workshop** at the Conference focuses on the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSE), which encourages faculty-initiated research in special education and is supplemented by a practical workshop for faculty to learn more about the application and funding process. A general session by Margo Mastropieri and 200 other sessions will fill the four-day conference with information, networking opportunities, and greater understanding of the challenges student with learning disabilities face.

Faculty teams who desire to participate must submit the required **application** and related materials **by December 10, 2007** via mail to LDA Teacher Educator Stipends, 4156 Library Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15234. The application can be found on our website at http://www.ldame.org/events.html#Events_Spotlight.

Selected applicants will be notified via e-mail by January 7, 2008.

Special thanks to the Learning Disabilities Foundation for providing stipend funding this year.

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On **Fridays** between **now and January 4, 2008**, riding the bus lines listed below will be **FREE**. Riding free on Fridays is one way Maine is responding to rising energy costs. As you watch the dials spin round at the gas pump and the figures next to the dollar sign go ever higher, think about alternative ways of getting to and from your classes, your place of work, or where you do your shopping. Try out mass transit for free on a Friday. Here's one way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the impact on your pocketbook!

Participating bus services include:
Aroostook Regional Transportation
Bangor BAT

Bath Bus
Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard ShuttleBus
Coastal Trans
Downeast Transportation
KVCAP
Lewiston/Auburn CitiLink
The Lynx
Portland METRO
RTP
Sanford Transit "My Bus"
South Portland Bus Service
Waldo County CAP
Western Maine Transportation Services
West's Bus Service

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Online Social Community for Families and Providers Who Live With or Serve Children with Autism

If you, or someone you know, works for or is a parent to children with autism, there is a new online social community website you can check out.

<http://www.foggyrock.com/>

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CHILDREN'S HEALTH
by Jon Hamilton

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16258238&sc=emaf>

All things considered, November 12, 2007 · A new study may explain why about half the children diagnosed with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) seem to grow out of it by the time they're in their 20s.

The study, published in the online edition of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, found that some brain regions in children with ADHD tend to mature later than normal.

Scientists hadn't realized this before because they usually rely on MRI scans of the brain that are like single snapshots – they only capture what's happening at a particular moment in time.

But for this study, a team at the National Institute of Mental Health used multiple snapshots of a child's brain taken at regular intervals as he or she grew up. They assembled these snapshots into time-lapse movies.

"You can see a wave of brain maturation going from this middle line," says lead author Philip Shaw, pointing to an animated brain image on his laptop. "The last bit to mature are these bits in the middle, which are important for the control of action and attention."

Action and attention are key functions that are disrupted in children with ADHD. Shaw's team studied more than 400 children – half of them with ADHD. The team measured changes in the thickness of the brain's gray matter, or cortex. Shaw says that for all the kids, the cortex followed the same sequence of change.

"It starts off relatively thin in early childhood," he says. "It gets thicker, then reaches its peak cortical thickness, and then it gets thinner throughout adolescence."

But Shaw says that when they compared the time-lapse images from the two groups, the timing of these changes was different.

"The big finding was the difference in the age at which they reached this milestone of peak cortical thickness," he says. "The healthy kids had a peak at around age 7 or 8, the kids with ADHD a couple of years later around the age of 10."

The delay in this developmental milestone was most apparent in the area of the brain that controls action and attention.

Judith Rapoport, another scientist involved in the study, says the scans showed that the brains of many of the kids with ADHD did eventually catch up.

"It's long been known that some kids, even if they seem very hyperactive and are a lot of trouble in early grades, seem to grow out of it and do extremely well, as their grandmother said all along they would," she says.

But Rapoport says it's not clear from the scans why some kids with ADHD continue to have problems. Researchers suspect it's because their brains remain immature.

Rapoport says teachers, doctors and investigators could do more for these children if they were able to identify them at the earliest possible age.

"If we could know earlier on in the game which are the children who are going to grow out of it one could reassure the parents," she says. "We could take all those resources that are being wasted, apply them to the ones that are not going to do as well."

The clues may come from studying the brains of infants – something this study didn't do. Nearly all of the children in the study were at least 5 when they had their first MRI. Younger kids are hard to diagnose and less likely to lie still for a brain scan.

Stewart Mostofsky of Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore says researchers need to find a way to look at younger brains.

"The real important question is what is happening earlier in brain development and brain maturation that is contributing to the onset of the disorder," he says. Mostofsky says that may involve events that occur before birth.



NEW FIRST FOCUS REPORT EXPOSES INACCURACIES ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH BILL

For RELEASE November 26, 2007

Children's Alliance to Offer New Education Report

AUGUSTA - Following up on the its groundbreaking 2006 report on public education in Maine, *A Case for Cooperation*, the Maine Children's Alliance will publish a new study of the progress Maine has made toward the goals of increased educational quality and greater efficiency throughout the educational system.

A Case for Cooperation was among several reports calling for greater cooperation among Maine's 290 separate school districts. In response, the Governor and Legislature enacted a school district consolidation law in June as part of the state budget that requires planning for no more than 80 districts by 2009.

"The first report was well-timed, and we think the timing of this one will be even better," said Elinor Goldberg, MCA's president and CEO. "There is tremendous statewide concern about taxes and school funding, but there are equally strong concerns that we maintain and improve the programs our schools offer."

In addition to publishing *A Case for Cooperation* and designing reform legislation sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Elizabeth Mitchell, MCA facilitated work on a regional school district plan in the Bath area. The resulting legislation, LD 910, authorized creation of the first new regional district in 40 years. Voters in five of the six participating municipalities voted overwhelmingly on Nov. 6 to participate in the new district, which will come into being on July 1, 2008.

The new report will assess the state school district consolidation legislation, as well as changes proposed for the 2008 legislative session that begins in January. Those chapters of the report will be issued as a separate "white paper" to coincide with the session opening, while the full report text will be published in the spring. Other sections will deal with how local districts and regions are working to

implement the new law, and how state and local planning for operation of the new districts can be enhanced.

"The state legislation made a dramatic start for changes in public education that have long been needed," said Jack Rosser, chair of the MCA report, who also headed several major state education commissions over the past two decades. "While nearly everyone recognizes that the law isn't perfect, it does provide a vehicle that can be refined and improved in the years ahead," he said. "We remain committed to encouraging cooperation among the state and local districts, and between our local schools to maximize opportunities for our young people." Rosser pointed out that voluntary cooperatives exist in several parts of the state, and their use can be expanded to provide classroom and non-classroom services in regions much larger than the state's targeted school district size of 2,500 pupils.

Douglas Rooks, a veteran journalist who now has a consulting business, Evergreen Communications, will be the writer for the new report, as he was for *A Case for Cooperation*.

Support for the MCA's Education Project is being provided by the Maine Department of Education and by TD Banknorth, the largest financial services company operating in Maine.

"We welcome the opportunity to support educational progress in Maine," said Larry Wold, President of TD Banknorth in Maine. "This report from MCA will serve as an important resource and provide valuable information that will help assure that our state and our students are well-served. A sound public educational system is a necessity for Maine to improve the climate for businesses and communities."

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NEWS RELEASE

Maine Department of Education, Susan A. Gendron, Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - November 27, 2007

Contact: David Connerty-Marin, 207-624-6880/207-831-3313

DOE Releases Adequate Yearly Progress List

Release also includes test scores on the Maine High School Assessment

AUGUSTA - The Maine Department of Education today released a list showing which Maine public schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for 2007-08, based on the 2007 administration of the MEA in grades 3 through 8 and the Maine High School Assessment (MHSA) to all third year public high school students. The MHSA is composed of the SAT reasoning test and an 18-question math supplement, known as the "math augmentation."

The Department also released the MHSA scores from the May 2007 administration. The results showed slight improvements in reading and writing. The math scores could not be compared to last year's because of the addition of the math supplement.

Thirty-nine schools that were previously listed as not making AYP as measured under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) made progress in 2007 and could exit "priority" status altogether in 2008 if they make adequate yearly progress for a second year in a row. Forty-three schools that were on the list remained there and 10 new schools joined them. Nine schools exited priority status. The majority of schools on the priority list continue to be middle schools and high schools.

To achieve AYP status, each school must meet the proficiency target for the whole school and for five subgroups: American Indian/Alaskan Native, African American/Black, economically disadvantaged, limited English proficient, and students with disabilities. To make AYP, the students in the five subgroups, as well as the whole school, must achieve targets in both reading and math. In addition, the whole group and all subgroups with 41 students or more must have 95 percent participation in the testing for the school to make AYP.

A school that does not make AYP two years in a row becomes a priority school. If the school receives federal Title I funds, the Department, using federal funds, works with the school on a School Improvement Plan to boost achievement. The Department is able to provide limited assistance to non-Title I schools as well.

The AYP results show:

- 403 of 635 schools made AYP
- 195 did not make AYP
- 37 are still awaiting review of the data
- 8 percent of schools did not make AYP in both math and reading
- 16 percent did not make AYP in reading only
- 6 percent did not make AYP in math only
- In reading, the groups/subgroups not making AYP were: students with disabilities (35 percent); multiple subgroups (20 percent); the whole school (12 percent); economically disadvantaged (8 percent). Another 3 percent of schools did not make AYP in reading because they did not have the required (95 percent) participation. Twenty-one percent of the schools in this category made AYP this year but did not last year, meaning their

status is on "hold" and they will exit priority status if they make AYP again next year.

- In math, students with disabilities account for 42 percent of the schools that did not make AYP.

After a two-year hiatus, science will be included in the May 2008 administration of the MHSA. A complete listing of all Maine High School Assessment (MHSA) programs and timelines can be found at:

<http://www.maine.gov/education/mhsa/index.htm>.

Education Commissioner Susan A. Gendron said she considers the high school assessment results to be positive.

"My sense is that schools are just starting to get a handle on the SAT initiative and how to make it work for their students," she said. "Kids are participating and they expect to take part in the SAT in their junior year."

Various support programs, such as an online test preparation course available to all students, have become better known and are being used more often by students and teachers.

The U.S. Department of Education, which initially questioned the SAT as an assessment tool for Maine students, has agreed to the SAT with the math supplement and has moved Maine to "approval expected" status under NCLB.

Complete AYP results, as well as an AYP Fact Sheet and additional AYP information can be found online at:

<http://www.maine.gov/education/pressreleases/ayp>.

The results of the Maine High School Assessment can be found at:

http://www.maine.gov/education/mhsa/school_reports.htm.

The previously-released results on the grades 3 through 8 MEA can be found at:

<http://www.maine.gov/education/mea/edmea.htm>.

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NEWS RELEASE

Maine Department of Education, Susan A. Gendron, Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - December 5, 2007

Contact:

Ellen Holmes, 207-660-5589

David Connerty-Marin, 207-624-6880/207-831-3313

REPORTERS AND EDITORS: If you are interested in interviewing any of the teachers, you may contact Ellen or David Connerty-Marin for contact information at each school, or contact the schools directly.

16 Maine Teachers Achieve Highest Certification

Only 40 percent of candidates succeed in the rigorous review

AUGUSTA - Sixteen more teachers from across Maine achieved National Board Certification this year, bringing the number of teachers in the state who meet the rigorous standards to 119. Maine has the fifth highest percentage growth (60 percent) of nationally certified teachers of all the states and the District of Columbia.

More than 60,000 of some of the most effective teachers in the country have demonstrated that they meet the highest teaching standards by becoming National Board Certified. The program began in 1999.

"National Board Certification is an extremely rigorous application process that only the highest quality teachers can achieve," said Education Commissioner Susan A. Gendron. "There is wide agreement among researchers that national certification is good for the climate of schools, good for promoting the profession, and that achievement on most measures is higher among students of these teachers."

The 16 teachers are: Sally Plourde, Prides Corner School, Westbrook; Phyllis Jones, Mabel I. Wilson School, Cumberland (MSAD 51); Cynthia Dean, Erskine Academy, South China; Raymond Fox, Falmouth Middle School; Lawrence Jackson, Falmouth Middle School; Randee-Sue Allen, Scarborough Middle School; Sheila Cochrane, Newport Elementary School (MSAD 48); Kathleen Slack, Mt. Desert Island High School, Bar Harbor (Mount Desert CSD); Brian Mcpherson, Woodside Elementary School, Topsham (MSAD 75); Lucille Bowers, Bonny Eagle Middle School, Buxton (MSAD 6); Rebecca Stern, Deering High School, Portland; Dianne Johnson, Fruit Street School, Bangor; Aimee Lanteigne, Sabattus Central School; Crystal Mcallaster, Mt. Ararat High School, Topsham (MSAD 75); Jorma Kurry, Falmouth High School; and Shannon Baker Digiulio, Sylvio J. Gilbert School, Augusta.

Gendron noted that only 40 percent of teachers who apply nationally achieve certification. In Maine, about 60 percent who apply achieve the certification. Gendron said Maine's higher rate of achievement is attributed to its strong candidate support program, a joint project of the Department and the Maine Education Association.

Ellen Holmes, a distinguished educator on loan to the Department from the MEA, said the Department provides a \$1,250 subsidy that covers half the candidate fee to many applicants. Some school districts provide part or all of the remainder; some candidates pay the difference. In 2006, Gov. John Baldacci signed into law a provision for an annual \$3,000 salary supplement for national board certified teachers.

Holmes, herself a nationally certified teacher, helped develop the support program and is the candidate support administrator for the program in Maine, which is run by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

National Board Certification is a voluntary assessment program designed to recognize and reward great teachers—and make them better. While state licensing systems set basic requirements to teach in each state, National Board Certified Teachers have successfully demonstrated advanced teaching knowledge, skills and practices. Certification is achieved through a rigorous, performance-based assessment that typically takes one to three years to complete.

“Like board-certified doctors and accountants, teachers who achieve National Board Certification have met rigorous criteria through intensive study, expert evaluation, self-assessment and peer review,” said NBPTS President and CEO Joseph A. Aguerrebere. “Research demonstrates that National Board Certified Teachers consistently outperform their peers in knowledge of subject matter and ability to create challenging and engaging lessons.”

As part of the process, teachers build a portfolio that includes student work samples, assignments, videotapes and a thorough analysis of their classroom teaching. Additionally, teachers are assessed on their knowledge of the subjects they teach.

“National Board Certification is part of a growing national movement that advances education reform. It’s a movement that improves teaching, advances student learning and makes schools better,” said former Georgia Governor Roy E. Barnes, chair of the NBPTS Board of Directors. “National Board Certified Teachers are leading the way in preparing America’s diverse student population with the skills it needs to compete in the 21st century.”

National Board Certified Teachers consistently receive top teaching honors while representing less than two percent of the nation’s teaching population. For example:

- Four of the last seven National Teacher of the Year recipients are NBCTs.
- Nearly a quarter of the 2007 state Teachers of the Year are NBCTs.
- Nearly one-third of the recipients of the 2006 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching are NBCTs.

All 50 states, the District of Columbia and more than 700 local school districts recognize National Board Certification as a mark of distinction and excellence. These municipalities provide valuable incentives to keep our most accomplished teachers in the classroom.

For more information about NBPTS and National Board Certification, visit the NBPTS Web site at www.nbpts.org

Date: Fri, 16 Nov 2007 19:31:26 +0000
BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD: HOUSE FAILS BY TWO VOTES TO OVERRIDE PRESIDENT'S VETO of the FY08 Labor, HHS, Education funding bill.

The House fell two votes short of the 2/3's majority of those voting needed to override the President's veto of the FY08 Labor, HHS, Education appropriations bill, which includes our \$2 million for Lifespan Respite. House and Senate appropriators will have to begin negotiations with the White House to trim spending in the overall funding bill in order to reach a compromise. If they fail to reach agreement, we could wind up with the same scenario we had last year -- no new funding bill, but essentially FY06-07 level funding for existing programs in FY08 through a year-long Continuing Resolution.

ACTION: Keep up the contacts, emails, phone calls, visits with your Representatives and Senators over the Thanksgiving Recess which begins today and urge them NOT TO FORFEIT the \$2 million for Lifespan Respite in funding bill negotiations. This tiny investment could go a long way to begin efforts to save and support the nation's family caregivers and as a result the backbone of our long-term care system. Most importantly, thank those members who voted YES to override the President's Veto. See how they voted (attached).

Again, to identify your federal legislators, visit www.congress.org and type in your zip code. You can cut and paste the message below and send an email here, too. The most effective way to share your message is in a face-to-face visit with your legislator while they are home for the Thanksgiving recess. If you prefer to reach your legislators by phone, call 202-224-3121 and ask for the Member's office. Then ask for appropriations staff and provide the following message:

MESSAGE:

-- Over this Thanksgiving Holiday in the midst of National Family Caregivers Month, please take a moment to give thanks for the nation's 50 million family caregivers who provide ongoing loving care to their relatives and friends with chronic and disabling conditions. Providing \$350 billion worth of uncompensated care, they are the backbone of the nation's long term care system.

-- Now that you have given thanks for them, TAKE ACTION. Do not allow House, Senate and White House negotiators to forfeit the tiny \$2 million investment in the Lifespan Respite Care Act, which is an important investment in our longterm care system. We finally have an opportunity to provide the one service -- respite -- family caregivers most frequently request and say they need to go on.

-- Thank you so much if you already voted YES to override the President's Veto of the FY 08 Labor, HHS Education appropriations act which includes not only funding for Lifespan Respite, but critical health, education, and social service dollars for the nation's most vulnerable families. Your vote counts and will not be forgotten.

Please take action today and then pass on this alert.

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LDA of America NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

Congress left town for the Thanksgiving break on November 16 and will not return until December 4. The proposal for the recess was passed by the House, but the Senate scheduled "pro forma" sessions to technically stay in session to prevent President Bush from making appointments without Senate consent. When Congress returns, there will be less than three weeks to pass essential spending legislation. If not, another Continuing Resolution must be passed to continue funding at the 2007 levels.

LEGISLATION

The status of legislation of interest is as follows:

Passed Legislation:

- **THE COLLEGE COST REDUCTION AND ACCESS ACT OF 2007** (HR 2669. now PL 110-317) will make college more affordable for low-income students by increasing funding for Federal Pell Grants by more than \$11 billion.
- **THE IMPROVING HEAD START FOR SCHOOL READINESS ACT OF 2007** (HR 1429) which will establish teacher requirements and expand access to the program for children from low-income families. The controversial proposal to test all 4 year olds in the program was dropped. President Bush was expected to sign the bill into law. Funding for these provisions are included in the Labor/HHS/Education bill.
- **THE COLLEGE OPPORTUNITY AND AFFORDABILITY ACT OF 2007** (HR 4137) was passed by the House Committee on Education and Labor. This is the second of two bills on higher education which includes forming

a Commission on Accessible Instructional Materials for Students with Disabilities to establish model demonstration programs to support improved access to materials for college students with disabilities.

Passed, but vetoed by the President:

- **THE STATE CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM** (SCHIP, HR 3963) On Thursday November 1, the Senate passed a revised version of legislation to reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). The House had passed an identical bill but failed to garner sufficient votes needed to override an expected Presidential veto. Congressional leaders have agreed not to attempt an override of the revised SCHIP bill, but will instead continue to work with negotiators to reach a compromise. The bill included a provision to delay the Center for Medicaid Services' limits on rehabilitative services and school based transportation for Medicaid eligible children receiving IDEA services.
- **FISCAL YEAR 08 LABOR/HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES /EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS** (HR 3043) include \$11.292 billion for Part B of IDEA (FY07 - \$10.783 billion); Title I ESEA Grants to local districts - \$14.311 billion (FY07 - \$12.838 billion); Reading First - \$400 million (FY07 - \$1.029 billion); Striving Readers - \$36 million (FY07 - \$31.9 million); Vocational Education State Grants - \$1.206 billion (FY07 - \$1.182 billion); Adult Education State Grants - \$576.5 million (FY07 - \$563.9 million); National Children's Study \$110.9 million. President Bush vetoed the bill and the House failed to override the veto. The White House also rejected a proposal from Senate Majority leader Reid to cut the extra funding from \$22 billion to \$11 billion. The future of these appropriations is uncertain.

Legislation in process:

- **THE ADA (Americans with Disabilities) RESTORATION ACT** (HR 3195, S 1881) would reverse recent Supreme Court decisions, such as the one which ruled that people who use medication to manage their condition are no longer protected by the law.

Dead for this session:

- NCLB Chairman Miller of the House Education and Labor Committee and Senator Kennedy of the Senate HELP (Health, Education, Labor and Pensions) Committee have abandoned efforts to pass reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act.
- **REAUTHORIZATION OF THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION ACT.** The Senate HELP Committee drafted a bill to reauthorize the Vocational Rehabilitation Act but contemplates no further action at this time.

Last minute Bills:

- **ASSESSMENT ACCURACY AND IMPROVEMENT ACT** (HR 3979, Petri , WI) would give states the option to use adaptive assessments to measure student achievement above and below grade level while also measuring grade level performance.
- **SUCCESS IN THE MIDDLE ACT** (S 2227, Obama) would provide grants to States to ensure that all students in the middle grades are taught an academically rigorous curriculum with effective supports so that students complete the middle grades prepared for success in high school and postsecondary endeavors. The bill is similar to HR 3406 introduced by Representative Grijalva. AZ.
- **THE IDEA FAIRNESS RESTORATION ACT** (H.R.4188, VAN HOLLEN,MD) would amend the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to permit a prevailing party in an action or proceeding brought to enforce the Act to be awarded expert witness fees and certain other expenses.
- **ADVANCING FASD (FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME) RESEARCH, PREVENTION, AND SERVICES ACT** (S.2141, Johnson, SD), would amend the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize and extend the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome prevention and services program.
- **THE LEAD ELIMINATION AND ABATEMENT AND POISONING PREVENTION ACT OF 2007** (S 2244, Clinton, NY) would require the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human services to carry out demonstration projects and outreach programs for the identification and abatement of lead hazards, establish the Joint Task Force on Lead-Based Hazards and the Task Force on Children's Environmental Health and Safety, and strengthen the authority of the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

FEDERAL AGENCIES

US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

THE TWENTY SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF IDEA consists of two volumes. Volume I focuses on the children and students being served under IDEA and includes state-level data and selected rank-ordered state data tables. Volume II contains extensive appendix tables of state-reported data required under IDEA, including the number of infants and toddlers receiving early intervention services disaggregated by demographic characteristics, disability status, and graduation and dropout data. The report is at:

<http://www.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/osep/2005/parts-b-c/>.

Nomination for OSERS Undersecretary - On November 15, President Bush announced his intention to nominate Tracy Ralph Justesen, of Utah, to be Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. Mr. Justesen currently serves as Deputy Director of the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research at the Department of Education. Prior to this, he served as an Attorney-Advisor in the Disability Rights Section at the Department of Justice. Earlier in his career, he served as an Associate Director in the Domestic Policy Council at the White House.

Grants to States to develop more appropriate assessments for students with disabilities who cannot take the general assessment will be used for developing:

- Modified academic achievement standards.(2% of students)
- Alternate academic achievement standards (1% of students).
- State assessments based on modified or alternate academic achievement standards.
- Clear and appropriate guidelines for Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams, which include parents, to identify children with disabilities who should be assessed based on alternate or modified academic achievement standards.
- Training on those guidelines for IEP teams.

TWO PERCENT Grants were given to the Alabama State Department of Education, Georgia Department of Education, Iowa Department of Education, Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13/Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network, Maryland State Department of Education, Michigan Department of Education, Montana Office of Public Instruction, Nebraska Department of Education, Ohio Department of Education, on behalf of Ohio, Minnesota and Oregon, Regents of the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, on behalf of Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, South Carolina Department of Education, SRI International, Menlo Park, Calif., on behalf of Oklahoma, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, on behalf of Arizona and Indiana, Virginia Department of Education, WestEd, San Francisco, on behalf of Kansas and Louisiana, West Virginia Department of Education, For further information go to <http://www.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/index.html>

USING STRATEGY INSTRUCTION TO HELP STRUGGLING HIGH SCHOOLERS UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY READ, a report from the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning from the Regional Instructional Laboratory of the Institute of Education Sciences designed to help high school teachers teach struggling readers by summarizing findings from rigorous, scientifically based studies of the effectiveness of teaching students to use and articulate strategies that foster active,

competent, self-regulated, and intentional learning.
(<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects>)

FROM THE CENTER FOR MEDICARE AND MEDICAID SERVICES

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services issued proposed regulations which, among other provisions, would limit 1) Medicaid's rehabilitative services option; 2) school based services for Medicaid eligible children receiving IDEA services; and 3) transportation for Medicaid eligible children receiving IDEA services. Final regulations are expected to be issued and become effective in February unless Congress delays implementation.

RESOURCES

LITERACY

ADOLESCENT LITERACY AdLit.org, funded by Carnegie Corporation of New York and by the Ann B. and Thomas L. Friedman Family Foundation, offers research-based articles, instructional material for classroom teachers, tips for parents, book recommendations, exclusive interviews with top authors, and a free, monthly e-newsletter called Word Up!

STUDENT THINK-ALOUD REFLECTIONS ON COMPREHENSIBLE AND READABLE ASSESSMENT ITEMS: PERSPECTIVES ON WHAT DOES AND DOES NOT MAKE AN ITEM READABLE

(NCEO Technical Report 48) reports on research related to large-scale assessments for students with learning disabilities in reading. The researchers examined the role of readable and comprehensible test items that could make assessments more universally designed, using think-aloud methods to better understand how interventions to improve readability affect student performance. Reducing word counts in items and making important words bold did not seem to affect student achievement but vocabulary did. Students had difficulty with non-construct vocabulary in both the stem and answer choices of items as well as with words that have negative prefixes (e.g., dis). This suggests that readability correlates with vocabulary and that construct and non-construct vocabulary must be clearly defined in order to make tests more accessible. Available only on the Web at <http://cehd.umn.edu/NCEO/OnlinePubs/technicalreports.html>

READING FIRST: LOCALLY APPRECIATED, NATIONALLY TROUBLED

a report from the Center on Education Policy highlights findings from CEP's research on the federal reading program. The report found that, despite problems with the federal administration of Reading First, the program is widely credited by state and local officials for lifting the achievement of students who receive services. Overall, more than three-fourths of states and two-thirds of districts with Reading First grants reported that the program's assessment and instructional programs were

important causes of gains in student achievement. Further, the report finds that Reading First's impact is felt far beyond the participating grades and schools, with more than half of Reading First districts using elements of Reading First in non-Reading First schools and in the upper grades. Similarly, states reported that more than 3,000 non-Reading First districts participated in state-led Reading First professional development. The report is posted on the [Center's web site](#) as the first item under "What's New" and can be downloaded free of charge.

READING ACROSS THE NATION: A CHARTBOOK presents state information on rates of reading to young children. This free resource can be downloaded from <http://www.healthychild.ucla.edu>. State pages can be downloaded individually and reproduced without charge. The chart book has been prepared for Reach Out and Read National Center by UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities.

DOCUMENTS FROM PROJECT FORUM OF NASDSE (National Association of State Directors of Special Education) available for download at <http://www.projectforum.org/>

- o Reading First and Special Education: Examples of State-Level Collaboration
- o Collaborative Partnerships between SEAs and PTIs
- o Parent Participation in State Monitoring
- o The National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS): Current State Implementation
- o State Definitions of Significant Disproportionality
- o Supplemental Educational Services Under NCLB: State Implementation for Students with Disabilities
- o Standards-based IEP Examples



Dear Friends: Thank you for your support and endorsement of the **Alliance for a Clean and Healthy Maine**. We have had a busy fall, as I'm sure you have too, and are looking ahead to the new legislative session. I have a few new things to share with you:

Let's work together on a new bill: Help us protect Maine families and children by setting up a framework to identify and phase out unnecessary dangerous chemicals in products intended for children! It's called: An Act to Protect Children's Health and the Environment from Toxic Chemicals in Children's Products and is sponsored by House Majority Leader, Representative Hannah Pingree, North Haven. Toxic toys from China are the tip of the iceberg; federal agencies do not adequately protect our kids. Toddlers have higher levels of toxic chemicals in their blood than do older children or adults. Even small amounts of some toxic chemicals can have serious implications when introduced at critical

times during childhood. We hope you and your organization will "sign-on" to support this bill and help speak out in favor of it. Further information will be available in coming weeks. I (Evelyn) will be calling/emailing you all about the bill and hoping you'll be willing help advocate for its passage.

SAVE-THE-DATE: March 4th, 2008 at the State House will be the Environmental Health Advocacy Day for the Alliance for a Clean and Healthy Maine. We will meet there, share skills and information, and talk with our elected officials about the above Children's Health bill and other related topics. Please put the date in your calendar and consider joining with us for the day!

CONFERENCE PLANNED FOR MARCH: March 14th, 2008 from 8:30-4pm at Abromson Center of the University of Southern Maine, Portland, a conference entitled: TOXICS AND TOMORROW'S CHILDREN. Organized by many of the partners of the Alliance for a Clean and Healthy Maine, the conference will bring together health and scientific experts, policy perspectives and activists to address the most pressing issues of toxic chemical exposure and children's health. Key speakers include so far: Dr. Phil Landrigan, MD, MSc., Director of the Center for Children's Health and the Environment; Charlotte Brody, RN, Executive Director of Commonweal and founder of Health Care Without Harm. For more information: Physicians for Social Responsibility of Maine 772-6714, psr_maine@yahoo.com attn: Melissa Boyd.

Thank you for your time and attention. I look forward to being in touch frequently in coming months.

Evelyn deFrees
Learning Disabilities Association of Maine Project Manager, Environmental Health

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'Leaner' special ed program proposed

The cost-cutting plan won't impact Portland classrooms, the acting superintendent says.

By KELLEY BOUCHARD Staff Writer November 22, 2007

A proposal to reduce special education costs in Portland schools by \$300,000 next year won't hurt classroom programs, Interim

Superintendent Jeanne Whynot-Vickers said Wednesday.

The district plans to redefine the role and reduce the number of learning strategists, who oversee all testing of special education students and develop their individual educational plans.

The proposal, which the School Committee will consider next Wednesday, would reduce the number of positions for learning strategists from 14 to seven next year, Whynot-Vickers said.

The proposal is part of a cost-cutting plan that's required under the state's new school consolidation law. It also addresses the committee's goal to reduce spending in response to a \$2 million deficit in last year's \$82 million school budget.

The district already has frozen 2 1/2 of the current 14 positions for learning strategist, which is expected to save \$135,000 in this year's \$85.7 million budget.

"We're going back to a leaner model," Whynot-Vickers said.

Portland provides special education to more than 1,300 of its 7,061 students. Services range from remedial reading to speech therapy to psychological counseling.

Portland taxpayers will spend \$3.7 million on special education this year, and the district receives about \$7 million each year in federal and state grants for special education programs.

While Maine's largest school district isn't required to merge with other districts under the new state law, it must submit a plan to cut spending on special education, transportation, building maintenance and system administration. The plan, which must be submitted to the Maine Department of Education by Dec. 1, cannot hinder or reduce classroom programs.

Portland started hiring learning strategists about 20 years ago to increase oversight of federally mandated special education programs and to maximize the time that special education teachers spend in the classroom, Whynot-Vickers said.

Over the years, the role of learning strategists has expanded to include everything from scheduling tests to serving on committees, she said. Learning strategists are paid \$50,000 to \$60,000 per year.

Faced with the challenge of cutting special education costs by 5 percent, Whynot-Vickers said she has little choice but to reduce the number of learning strategists.

While some special education jobs, such as teachers, education technicians and social workers, must be filled to ensure compliance with federal mandates, learning strategists aren't required.

"They are the only non-mandated positions in special education," Whynot-Vickers said.

Where possible, the district is expected to eliminate positions through retirements and resignations.

If the School Committee approves the change, the district will create three lesser-paid clerical positions to schedule special education testing throughout the district, she said. Schools must test special education students regularly to monitor their progress, comply with federal mandates and ensure future grant funding.

The seven remaining strategists would oversee special education testing and individual educational plans throughout the city's 10 elementary schools, three middle schools, two high schools and other facilities. They would get help from building principals, teachers and other school staff members, Whynot-Vickers said.

The district's cost-cutting plan also would bring the following savings next year: \$60,000 by having the South Portland School Department maintain Portland's school buses; \$50,000 by having the city's staff maintain school heating and air-conditioning systems; and \$60,000 by closing the district's supply warehouse on Homestead Avenue and buying directly from vendors.

Staff Writer Kelley Bouchard can be contacted at 791-6328 or at:
kbouchard@pressherald.com
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NEWS RELEASE

Maine Department of Education, Susan A. Gendron, Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - November 28, 2007

Contact: David Connerty-Marin, 624-6880/831-3313

Bill Would Remove Financial Barriers to Consolidation

Allows local cost-sharing agreements and removes disincentives

AUGUSTA - A bill proposed by the Maine Department of Education and released today removes unintended financial barriers in the school district reorganization law. The bill addresses three funding issues that have been identified as obstacles to some consolidation efforts.

"My Administration has been working with school administrative units to add flexibility to help them achieve the requirements of the law," said Gov. John Baldacci, who worked with Education Commissioner Susan A. Gendron to amend the school funding law. "The intent of the law is to encourage consolidation, not discourage it. In three specific ways, some districts would be penalized for doing the right thing. These changes should remove unintended barriers to consolidation."

Jim Rier, Director of Finance and Operations for the Department, said Commissioner Gendron has indicated for several months that she would propose the changes and many units have moved forward in their discussions based on that expectation.

"They've asked for more tools and flexibility and this gives it to them," Rier said. "In many regions around the state, communities have been moving forward and doing excellent work to plan for consolidation, even though they knew some of the units would take a financial hit while their neighbors might gain. Now we can tell them 'you can fix that.' In other places, where cost shifts have stood in the way of units coming together, they can move forward."

Nearly every reorganization effort will benefit from the proposed changes. The bill, LD 1932, An Act To Amend the Laws Regarding School Funding, would:

- Allow local cost-sharing agreements among school administrative units forming a regional school unit. In regions where consolidation might shift costs (above the state-determined Essential Programs and Services allocation) from one unit to another, the units will now be able to design their own cost-sharing agreement to compensate for the shift. The proposed changes would allow those units to base their agreement on property valuation, the number of pupils, a combination of those, or any other factors they may choose.

Allowing local cost-sharing agreements could benefit almost every reorganization effort, though in many cases the cost-shifting is minimal:

- In Falmouth and SAD 51 (Cumberland, North Yarmouth), the units have been moving forward despite a significant shift in cost to Falmouth that can be eliminated through a local cost-sharing agreement if the legislation

passes.

- Freeport, Pownal and Durham have been holding consolidation discussions, but cost-shifting caused by the addition of Durham to the mix has been a concern that could now be addressed through a local cost-sharing agreement.

- The consolidation of Caribou, Fort Fairfield, Limestone and surrounding communities is another example of an RSU that will benefit from the provision to allow local cost-sharing agreements.

- Remove the requirement that all units joining a regional school unit must raise at least 2 mills toward the cost of education (the Essential Programs and Services allocation). The requirement for the 2 mill minimum, which affected roughly two dozen mostly higher property valuation communities, had the effect of discouraging some consolidations because the penalty for opting out of consolidation would be less than the added cost of raising 2 mills. The proposed changes remove the 2 mill requirement.

Approximately two dozen school units around the state will benefit from the removal of the 2 mill minimum requirement, including Southport and Rangeley Plantation.

- Ensure that “minimum subsidy receiver units” would not lose their subsidy if they joined in an RSU.

Under current school funding law, a unit that is able to raise its entire Essential Programs and Services allocation for less than the state-determined mill rate receives a minimum subsidy - the greater of 5 percent of the EPS amount or 84 percent of special education, usually the latter.

Under the existing reorganization law, in some circumstances, when a minimum subsidy receiver joins with a regular subsidy receiver, the new RSU would become a regular subsidy receiver meaning the RSU would lose the minimum subsidy, adversely impacting the RSU as a whole, and especially the former minimum subsidy receiver. The bill would restore the minimum subsidy to the new RSU, specifically to the current minimum subsidy receiver.

About 80 school units are minimum subsidy receivers, though not all of them have been adversely affected by the potential loss of minimum subsidies. Among those benefiting will be: Saco, Dayton and Old Orchard Beach; the units in the Mount Desert Island area; and the units on the peninsula that includes Boothbay Harbor.

Governor Baldacci said the fixes to the funding law will allow units to move forward and the law to have its intended effect.

"Make no mistake, this is a complicated process with an aggressive timeline," he said. "People of good faith are making this work, and with these changes to the funding side of the law we can make their jobs a lot easier."

The bill, sponsored by Education Committee co-chairs Sen. Peter Bowman, D-York County, and Rep. Jacqueline Norton, D-Bangor, is scheduled for a public hearing before their committee on Dec. 12 and a work session the next day. Additional co-sponsors are senators Elizabeth Mitchell, D-Kennebec County, and Karl Turner, R-Cumberland County; and representatives Emily Cain, D-Orono, Sawin Millett, R-Waterford, and Meredith Strang Burgess, R-Cumberland. The bill is expected to go before the full House and Senate almost immediately after the Legislature returns to session on Jan. 2.

The full text of the bill, LD 1932, can be found online at:
<http://janus.state.me.us/legis/LawMakerWeb/summary.asp?ID=280027315>

Or by going to <http://www.maine.gov/legis> and entering "1932" in the box in the upper right corner.

The Department has posted information about developing local cost-sharing agreements, including a template and link to the legislation, on the [planning and resources page](http://www.maine.gov/education/supportingschools) of its reorganization website:
www.maine.gov/education/supportingschools.

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Susan A. Gendron: Saving money does improve Maine education
Saturday, November 17, 2007 - Bangor Daily News

Two weeks ago I had the honor and privilege of awarding one of teaching's highest awards to Brian Jandreau, an English teacher at South Portland High School. He is one of fewer than 80 teachers nationwide to receive the prestigious Milken Family Foundation award this year.

The Milken award – which includes a \$25,000 check, a Grammy Awards-style banquet in Los Angeles, and the opportunity to participate in the world-class annual Milken Education Conference – encourages and supports good teachers and encourages good people to go into teaching to improve achievement for all students.

It is self-evident that teachers are the key to a child's learning, and better teachers with better training and support – financial and otherwise – will result in better achievement by students.

As school systems around the state work to reorganize under the new reorganization law, one issue has surfaced that directly affects teachers: What will happen when teacher contracts from two or more units are merged into one? Won't the salaries go to the highest contract in the region? And if so, how will that save money?

In all cases local school boards, not the state, make the decisions about how to spend resources and what terms to include in their negotiations of contracts. In fact, the law does not describe the final terms of any contract, or dictate that all teachers in the new unit be on the same pay scale.

As with all negotiations, merging contracts will require creative thinking, good faith, and keeping the best interests of employees, students and taxpayers in mind.

I have been asked why we talk so much about saving money and not about improving education. I speak as often as I can about the educational opportunities that will be created through a more cohesive system of school administrative units that will be able to work with schools to disseminate the best teaching practices and improve learning opportunities for students in a way that is not possible in the current system.

But it is also vitally important to recognize that saving money is about improving education, and its purpose is to ensure that as many resources as possible go into our students' classrooms – first and foremost to supporting teachers and professional development. Why wouldn't we want our resources going to the people having the greatest impact on how our students learn?

There are several mechanisms already in place to make combining teacher contracts possible in a way that won't harm school systems financially, and will contribute to educational improvements. More than half the state's school administrative units do not spend as much on teacher salaries as is recommended under their Essential Programs and Services allocation. Those units could pay their teachers more if they would shift the funds from nonclassroom line items.

There are several adjustments to the state funding formula that can supplement teacher salaries. For example, additional money is included for K-2 instruction to allow for fewer students in each classroom. And there is a labor market adjustment for each region of the state.

Administrative reorganization and streamlining in noninstructional areas will save new units money which can be put into teaching salaries and professional development.

Meanwhile, funding for school units will increase next year, making more funds available in key areas including curriculum and instruction. While there has been

significant discussion of the \$36.5 million reduction in three nonclassroom budget areas and special education, state subsidy for local schools will increase by \$43.5 million overall in FY2009, a 4.4 percent jump. In fact, over four years state subsidies will have increased by a cumulative \$800 million.

The challenge is to keep our eye on the prize – excellent school systems with well-supported teachers – and to direct the greatest part of our resources toward the achievement of that goal statewide. With that as our financial and educational goal, I am confident that those entrusted with building vibrant and successful school units that serve our children will find positive solutions.

Susan A. Gendron is commissioner of the Maine Department of Education.

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Hi all,

Many of you are familiar with the Safety Awareness for Empowerment (SAFE) curriculum that was developed several years ago at Waisman Center's Healthy and Ready to Work Project to help youth and adults with developmental disabilities build community/personal safety skills.

The eight modules include topics like:

- staying home alone
- basic first aid
- friendships and how to assess when they might be becoming unsafe
- romantic relationships
- sexuality
- personal safety
- avoiding scams and other ways of being victimized

This curriculum, which was extensively reviewed by sexuality experts, is now available FOR THE COST OF SHIPPING ONLY! That's \$10 per copy. It includes more than 30 8x12 glossy photos to share with students and many, many experiential activities and role plays. It comes in a 4-inch binder with accompanying DVD.

Here is a link to the order form, which you can fill out and return along with payment to the address on the form:

http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/hrtw/Order_Form.pdf

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Long-term outlook critical for consolidation

Sunday, November 18, 2007 - Sun Journal

The commissioner's job is helping schools districts re-organize under the law

As communities around the state seek to understand and comply with the many provisions of the School Administrative Reorganization Law, the reorganization management team at the Maine Department of Education and I are working daily to understand and properly apply the law, and give guidance to school units on how to proceed.

While some people think I have broad authority to implement the law and either approve or reject reorganization plans, I am tightly bound to the letter and intent of the reorganization law. My job is not to approve what I like and reject what I dislike, but to apply the law and help all units comply.

The law includes some elements that were intentionally left vague by the Legislature - for example, what issues of geographic isolation or particular demographics allow school units, or groups of school units, to be exempted from the requirement to form regional school units of at least 2,500 students.

The Legislature's intent was clear - to allow flexibility, but not set parameters so specific they result in automatic exceptions for units not needing them, or automatic rejection of units that might have legitimate reasons to be smaller.

Perhaps more important than these parameters, however, is Section 1451 of the reorganization law, which outlines the Legislature's policy objectives. They include, among others, providing: equitable opportunity for all students to achieve Maine's Learning Results; rigorous academic programs; the effective use of public funds; and the efficient use of limited resources, in order to achieve long-term sustainability and predictability in support of public schools.

It is this last objective - long-term sustainability - that is paramount as I review proposals for reorganization. Our current system of 290 school administrative units will not survive to provide the educational opportunities our students deserve. As costs rise and enrollments decline, it will become harder and harder to put the greatest financial resources possible into the classroom.

While state subsidies to local education have grown significantly over the past three years, and will grow another \$43.5 million next year, funding increases will flatten in 2009-2010 as education spending comes under state spending limits. Increases will be less than 3 percent, making it harder to spend that money where it's needed most - on resources for our students and support for teachers in the classroom.

In a recent column (Nov. 11) Sen. David Hastings, R-Fryeburg, made note of an agreement I made to consider population density as grounds for exempting school administrative units from the requirement to have 2,500 students. Sen. Hastings felt I failed to uphold this agreement when I notified SADs 55, 61, and

72 their plans to remain separate are noncompliant with the provisions of the law.

I agreed to the density exception only as one of the many parameters to be considered in determining whether or not to approve a particular reorganization or alternative plan.

No single parameter has been, or will be, the basis upon which I determine a plan to comply with the law. Under the law, I must look at all parameters, as well as other proposed school units in each region, to determine whether plans will lend themselves to long-term sustainability for individual school systems, the region, and the state education system overall.

Communities around the state have done excellent work - under an extremely tight timeline - developing plans for reorganization that will best meet the needs of their students. Representatives of SAD 61 have presented me with new evidence that they are looking at long-term sustainability and at the tough choices (e.g., cuts to administration) they will have to make if they remain alone and direct the greatest resources possible to instructional programs.

I cannot say if their plan will meet the requirements of the law until it is reviewed, but they are asking the right questions and examining the fundamental issues facing their unit in the coming years.

The department of education is working with units around the state to overcome obstacles in developing reorganization plans that create savings locally and statewide and, more important, create educational opportunities for their students that can be sustained over the long run.

Susan A. Gendron is commissioner of the Maine Department of Education.

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November 2007

New Website for Selling & Buying Used Assistive Devices and Adaptive Equipment

www.getATstuff.com

A new web resource has been launched by the New England Assistive Technology Programs.

www.getATstuff.com will help families, people with disabilities, seniors and the public to buy and sell used assistive technology and adaptive equipment. The site is designed to get devices that are no longer being used into the hands of people who want them and could benefit from them. Items can be listed *for sale or free*.

The site has many equipment categories for items related to vision, hearing, mobility, environmental adaptations, computers, recreation, sports, and adapted vans/vehicles.

"I think that people will really benefit from this new resource" said Eric McVay of Hampden, Maine. "I went to www.getATStuff.com and found some computer equipment that I wanted. This new website will help people with disabilities get more devices and equipment."

Visit www.getATstuff.com to browse or to list your own items for sale.



State of Maine's Assistive Technology Program Maine Consumer Information and Technology Training Exchange

AT CONSORTIA

MaineCITE is a statewide program that helps Maine people of all ages find and get the assistive technology devices and services they need to live full independent lives. Administered by the Department of Education, the Maine CITE works in partnership with other organizations to help implement its activities.

Maine CITE Coordinating Center

Provides information, technical assistance and training on assistive and accessible information technology, helps to develop policy, explores ways to increase funding alternatives and provides web-based classified ads of used AT devices. 207-621-3195 V, 207-621-3482 TTY or www.maine cite.org

Disability Rights Center

Provides legal and other advocacy services for people with disabilities including assistance in obtaining necessary financial support or reimbursement for assistive technology. 1-800-452-1948 V/TTY, 207-626-2774 V/TTY or www.drcme.org

Alpha One

Provides statewide information and referral, peer support, Independent Living assessment, AT financing, benefits counseling, home access, adapted driver assessment and public policy development. 800-640-7200 V/TTY, 207-767-2189 V or www.alphaonenow.com

Technical Exploration Center (TEC)

A place to discover, learn about, practice and use assistive technologies: providing AT assessment, device demonstration and short-term loan. 866-274-0029 V, 207-992-9270 V/TTY or www.tecmaine.org

University of Maine - Farmington

Educates teachers and early childhood specialists, operates an AT Center for device demonstration and loan. 207-778-7266 V, 207-778-7000 TTY or specialed.umf.maine.edu/at.php

ATMaine

Provides assistive technology training, consultation, development and support. 800-873-0190 V, 207-512-2387 V or www.atmaine.com

ALLTech

A nationally recognized center providing consultation, demonstration and loans in the areas of assistive technology and specialized software. Offers training in web accessibility and universal design. 866-688-4573 x150 V, 207-688-4591 TTY or www.alltech-tsi.org

Mainely Access

Provides comprehensive access evaluations, training in the use of adaptive hardware and software, and workplace integration of access technology. 207-650-8151 V/TTY or www.mainelyaccess.com

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

The Department of Labor program

CARES, Inc.

Provides training and advocacy services, public policy development, case management and AT device demonstrations for veterans with disabilities. 800-773-7055 V/TTY, 207-622-7055 V/TTY or www.caresinc.org

IRIS Network

Provides a low vision clinic and rehabilitation services, housing, information and resources. 800-715-0097 (Maine only) V/TTY, 207-774-6273 V/TTY or www.theiris.org

Pine Tree Society

Communications Pathways provides services for AT assessment, device demonstration and short-term loans. The Kid's Project makes adaptive furniture. 207-443-3341 V/TTY or www.pinetreesociety.org

Maine Center on Deafness (MCD)

MCD equipment Program: Offers sliding scale, free and low-cost adaptive telecommunications equipment. Better Living Program: Offers discounted prices on things such as alarm clocks and smoke detectors. 800-639-3884 V/TTY, 207-797-7656 V/TTY or www.mcdmaine.org

VSA arts of Maine

Provides inclusive arts, education and cultural

that helps people who have disabilities to get and keep a job.
www.maine.gov/rehab/

opportunities 207-761-3861
V/TTY or
www.vsartsmaine.org

mPower Loan Program

Provides low-interest financing to buy AT devices, access modifications at home and business.

Individual Loans: Alpha One, 800-640-7200 V/TTY

www.mpowerloans.org or
www.alphaonenow.com

Business Loans: Finance Authority of Maine, 800-228-3734,
www.famemaine.com

**The University of Maine
Center for Community
Inclusion & Disability Studies
(CCIDS)**

CCIDS serves as a link between the university and the community through a broad range of interdisciplinary education, research, community service and dissemination activities. The Center's work incorporates the principles of inclusion, diversity, universal design and access and social justice related to enhancing the quality of life for individuals with disabilities of all ages. 800-203-6957
V/TTY, 207-581-1084 V/TTY
or ccids.umaine.edu

Maine Parent Federation /SPIN

Provides information for families and educators on early childhood and special education services 800-870-7746 (Maine only), 207-623-2144 V/TTY, or www.mpf.org

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Thanks,
Laura Soule
Executive Assistant
Learning Disabilities Assoc. of Maine (LDA of ME)
PO Box 67
Oakland, ME 04963
Phone: 1.877.208.4059 or 207.465.7700
Fax: 207.465.4844
Web Site: <http://www.ldame.org>

Attachments

MISSION STATEMENT

The Learning Disabilities Association of Maine is dedicated to assisting individuals with learning and attention disabilities through support, education, and advocacy (SEA).