

EDUCATION DAILY®

The education community's independent daily news service

BUDGET 2011

34 states cut K-12 budgets in FY 2010, survey finds

By Frank Wolfe

Although the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act pumped \$48 billion into state coffers for education purposes through the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund, states still had significant trouble making ends meet in FY 2010, and the situation does not look much brighter for FY 2011, according to a new biannual report from the National Governors Association and the National Association of State Budget Officers.

Indeed, 34 states cut their K-12 budgets by nearly \$5.5 billion in FY 2010, and 31 are likely to do so for FY 2011, according to The Fiscal Survey of States, which collected data from the states in the spring.

"Our best estimate of the remaining state shortfalls for 2010-2012 is \$127.4 billion. Because states lag behind national recovery, they expect 2011 to be as bad as 2010, and states will not begin the path to recovery until 2012," said Raymond Scheppach, executive director of NGA.

"Spending cuts have been made across the board and governors have been tremendous fiscal stewards. However, it will continue to be an uphill climb for states until 2013 when revenues are expected to return to 2008 levels."

Although governors and state legislators have traditionally protected K-12 during economic downturns, the sustained severity of this one has endangered that stand. For example, policymakers in Utah exempted K-12 education from cuts in FY 2010.

Nevertheless, lawmakers in that state reduced funding for the state agencies that oversee LEAs and charter schools, according to the fiscal survey.

Indeed, K-12 is a ready target for budget-cutters when times are particularly tough, given that elementary and secondary education represents more than 20 percent of state spending nationally — a status that makes K-12 expenditures the largest piece of the state budget pie, alongside Medicaid.

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EXTENDED LEARNING TIME

Districts use summer programs to leverage ARRA

By Sarah D. Sparks

Districts can get a jump on professional development and student achievement alike by leveraging their American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds when schools let out for summer.

The Education Department treats any ARRA funds coming through Title I, Part A as part of a district's total FY 2009 Title I allocation, meaning its 18-month availability ends Sept. 30, 2010. A district must obligate at least 85 percent of its funds by this date, with the remaining 15 percent available through Sept. 30, 2011.

In ARRA's case, ED guidance allows a district to apply to waive the normal carryover limit of 15 percent of the total Title I, Part A allocation, and the department has been open to approving these waivers even if the district has already gone above the 15 percent limit in the past three years.

Still, between shrinking state budgets and shifting federal guidance, many districts have not spent the bulk of their ARRA Title I boost yet, and spending the required 85 percent can be a challenge.

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Calif. education secretary discusses CTE, ESEA

By Emily Ann Brown

Bonnie Reiss was appointed by California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger earlier this year as the state's secretary of education.

She previously served as senior advisor to the governor on major policy initiatives, including education, the environment and children's issues.

She recently spoke with *Education Daily*® about career and technical education, common core standards and ESEA reauthorization. Following are edited excerpts from the conversation.

Q: *Career and technical education programs tend to be the first programs cut in times of fiscal constraint. Has that been the case in California?*

A: No. In California, there's what's called an "A to G" curriculum. To be considered or to be admitted to college in California you have to graduate from high school and you have to have taken an A to G class.

Members of the University of California/California State faculty certify A to G classes. Curriculum gets presented to the UC faculty to determine if a math class is rigorous enough to constitute an A class, a B class, etc.

There's been a movement afoot in the past few years that more and more career and technical education classes certify as basic A to G — so it's not basic classes that ready you for college and then you have your career tech.

The head of community colleges in California, Jack Scott, has asked us "Shouldn't a class that's able to teach algebra and certain kinds of mathematics through construction qualify as rigorous? Aren't they rigorous enough?"

Those are the kinds of things that the UC faculty has really looked at. And hundreds of career and technical education classes have been brought forth for having the rigor necessary to constitute as an A to B class, meaning as part of the basic curriculum, students need to take such classes in high school.

Q: *A recent report looks at how California is responding to the sustainability and clean energy movement by developing related curriculum. Do you think California is primed to be a leader in this area?*

A: Big time. Because of the size of California, we're able to do that. For example, if we create a climate-change cap-and-trade system, and we say that

starting in 2015 you won't be allowed to sell transportation fuel in our state unless it meets a carbon content standard — that would create a market.

Or, if our utilities are told that by 2015, 20 percent of the electricity they provide has to be from renewable energy — that creates a market. And because that creates a market, money flows in, businesses come to California and community colleges can provide more career and technical education opportunities — and the kids know there will be jobs.

Q: *Do you believe the common core standards will help transform education, particularly in California?*

A: States like California, Massachusetts and Florida — we're some of the states that have been known to have very rigorous, high standards that are already internationally benchmarked and aligned with our curriculum and teacher professional development. We just put our standards commission together to take a look at common core and to see how it compares to ours.

We're actually hoping and believe that most of our current standards actually will be as rigorous, if not more so, than some of the common core standards. And with the 15 percent flexibility, we'll be able to pretty much maintain most of our current standards and have a few course corrections based on common core.

Nationally speaking, it's a very important movement. Most states don't have rigorous, internationally benchmarked standards like California, Massachusetts and Florida.

Q: *President Obama's blueprint for ESEA reauthorization is nearly silent on CTE as part of its definition of well-rounded learning; however, there is a focus on STEM. If you had it your way, would you place more emphasis on CTE?*

A: I would, but I would do it in a way — and I think President Obama would be the perfect leader to do this — I would do it in a way that that it's not separate. CTE is STEM. CTE is green jobs. CTE is construction. And it's all rigorous.

I think that the nation needs to continue the movement that I think California is leading on, and that is looking at CTE not as a separate education track, but is embedded in everything.



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House passes \$86 billion America COMPETES bill

Senate set to take up landmark reauthorization legislation

By **Emily Ann Brown**

The House passed before Memorial Day recess a bill reauthorizing the America COMPETES Act, which would authorize nearly \$86 billion over five years to basic research and education programs related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields.

At the heart of H.R. 5116 remains an original COMPETES goal to double federal investments over ten years for the Energy Department, the National Science Foundation, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

The bill renews support for STEM education by reauthorizing the Robert Noyce scholarships, which support K-12 teachers in their fields so they can better engage students. The bill also addresses coordination of STEM initiatives across the federal government, and aims to advance STEM education at the postsecondary level to increase the number of U.S. graduates entering science and technical careers.

The new version also invests federal dollars toward learning and technological development of emerging industry technologies — clean energy, nanotechnology and IT — areas in which other countries, legislators argue, have outpaced the U.S.

Senate authorization

COMPETES, which originally passed with strong bipartisan support in 2007, is now set to be debated in the Senate. As policymakers return from the Memorial Day recess, stakeholders are advocating for swift renewal of the landmark innovation legislation.

The reauthorization process in the Senate is a multi-committee effort, led by Sens. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., and Lamar Alexander, R.-Tenn., with staff members from the Energy; Health, Education, Labor and Pensions; Commerce; Science and Transportation; and Appropriations committees.

While a timeline on its passage is unclear, experts have said that concerns over increased federal spending, which handicapped House approval before a final 262-150 vote, will likely be a contentious issue among senators as well.

GOP members of the House Science and Technology Committee had offered several amendments throughout the legislative process, in addition to a motion to recommit on the House floor with hopes to reduce increased spending, but all were struck down.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates H.R. 5116 authorizes nearly \$23 billion above currently appropriated levels, Republicans said.

Jonathan Nurse, assistant director for the University of Washington Office of Federal Relations, in a blog said the Senate may push for a shorter authorization in order to “satisfy fiscal watchdogs.”

Indeed, in light of current economic pressures the Senate is less amenable to a full 5-year authorization and ramped up funding for STEM programs, Teryn Norris, director of Americans for Energy Leadership, told *Education Daily*®.

“Of course these things are flexible and they can change,” Norris said, “but given the fiscal pressures right now to show some tightening of the belt it’s going to be tricky.”

BUDGET 2011

CUTS (continued from page 1)

Added impetus

The latest NGA/NASBO findings will likely add impetus to education groups’ efforts to get a \$23 billion education jobs fund passed by Congress. That fund is likely to be included in the House version of the FY 2010 Supplemental Appropriations Act, H.R. 4899, given support for the fund from Chairman Dave Obey, D-Wisc., although the chances there are still somewhat dicey, given the fears among lawmakers about rising deficits.

The Senate did not include the \$23 billion in its version of the supplemental, which passed that body on May 27.

According to the latest NGA/NASBO survey, California, Georgia, New Jersey, Virginia, Washington, Alabama, Kentucky, Iowa, Mississippi

and South Carolina were the 10 states that cut K-12 education the most in FY 2010. California sliced \$892.6 million, Georgia \$617.6 million, New Jersey \$560 million, Virginia \$550 million, Washington \$382 million, Alabama \$296.8 million, Kentucky \$276.2 million, Iowa \$238.5 million, Mississippi \$225.1 million, and South Carolina \$186.9 million.

“States are still reeling from the downturn after the unprecedented declines in year over year spending in fiscal 2009 and 2010,” said Scott Pattison, the executive director of NASBO. “States face significant fiscal challenges going forward with the federal Recovery Act funds ending, revenues not expected to be returning to pre-recession levels, and higher demands for many services like health and education.”

The survey is available at www.nga.org/Files/pdf/FSS1006.PDF.

PROGRAMS (continued from page 1)

“Money is not the issue. In many of the districts, their ARRA allocation was almost double their regular allocation, and they’ve been sitting on it,” said Rick Carder, president of the National Association of Federal Education Program Administrators. Carder held five workshops in May to help districts figure out how to spend their remaining ARRA money quickly and safely.

“They get frozen in saying, ‘I have a lot of money but I can’t use it because of all the regulations.’ I say, ‘Guys, that’s what that money was for, to be creative,’ but in the districts at the top level, people are just scared to death,” Carder said.

Yet the end of school may be the beginning of creativity for districts looking to spend ARRA money before the deadline. Summer programs allow districts more flexibility to use extended learning time schedules, teacher mentoring and other professional development, or new materials and technology, either to prepare students for the regular school year or to pilot programs to be expanded in the curriculum come fall.

Build on needs

San Juan Unified School District, just outside Sacramento, Calif., started its ARRA spending last year to meet a local economic crisis. The district extended Title I services to five new schools this year, in response to the its drastic increase in poverty; the wealthiest of the new schools still has 58 percent of students from low-income families.

“All of a sudden we have this windfall, but we know it’s not going to be here forever. One of my biggest concerns was, ‘Oh my goodness, I hope we spend all of this,’” said Linda Cook, federal programs director for San Juan USD.

That’s why this summer, the district launched a massive strategic literacy program supported by ARRA Title I funds. School libraries at 11 schools around the 70-square-mile district will stay open for six weeks this summer for classes focused on reading and writing for the district’s at-risk students. The sites will also hold lunch-hour classes for Title I parents on how to read with their children and encourage literacy at home.

“There’s a strong connection between our summer program and our district strategic plan,” Cook said. “Our goal is to have every child a reader by the age of 9.”

The district has even hired new literacy coaches to use the summer classes as a professional development lab, mentoring teachers in ways to improve literacy instruction next year.

“In the last week I’ve interviewed 26 English-

language specialists. These people have been asked to do a demonstration lesson, and I can’t believe how far they’ve come in their instructional delivery model,” Cook said. “I think ARRA offered an opportunity for districtwide professional development that we haven’t had before.”

In the end, she advised other districts to keep it simple.

“I guess we looked at this as, what can we do with Title I dollars that could be an extension of what we do currently? If nothing else, have a plan for spending it and then spend it,” Cook said.

Bassett Unified School District in California did just that. The district uses the online writing software MY Access! to assign students writing projects to accompany their summer reading lists. The company generally includes professional development for teachers on how to use the program for instruction, but this year, the district has used Title I to expand the program to incorporate technology training for parents as well.

“We teach the parents how to view their student’s work, how to generate reports about their progress, [and] how to discuss their child’s writing,” said Stephanie Dixon, MY Access! consultant for Bassett. “A lot of these parents have never talked about writing with their child, so this is just a great way to link the gap from school to home and get parents involved in their students’ learning.”

Likewise, Portland Public Schools in Oregon has used ARRA funds to develop three summer “transition academies” intended to help at-risk students bridge the gap in grades where students traditionally start to fall behind.

The kindergarten/first grade summer academy boosts young students’ reading, writing and math skills in small groups, while the five-week middle school program helps graduating fifth-grade students gain skills for middle school through class enrichments and field trips. The six-week ninth-grade transition program allows at-risk students to earn early high school credits through technology, building projects and field trips.

The district has even created a five-week cultural enrichment program for Native American students who need extra academic help.

The key, Carder said, is to leverage the ARRA funding to build on your existing Title I program; this will give the program greater impact and help make the changes more sustainable.

“Analyze what you’ve been doing. If what you’ve been doing in common practice has not been producing, look at how you can change that,” he said. “Use ARRA to soften the transition while you are changing what you do with your regular Title I money.”