

Latino and ELL Education in the 111th Congress



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- Political Landscape
- Policy Landscape
- Key Issues for Latinos
- Legislative Outlook

Political Landscape

Congress is not fully informed of issues affecting Latino and ELL students; we need new supporters.

- Turnover in Hill staff.
- Loss of champions, including Representative Hilda Solis (chief sponsor of the “PRIDE Act”) and Senator Edward M. Kennedy (focused on health care reform).
- New Members of Congress.

Political Landscape

The U.S. Department of Education is not yet fully staffed.

- Attention to detail and policy making is currently being driven by “consultants,” including:
 - Former Clinton Administration official Mike Smith (not good on bilingual education).
 - Erickson Institute co-founder Barbara Bowman (not clear that she is good on bilingual education).

Policy Landscape

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the “economic stimulus bill,” has commanded everyone’s attention.

- Funding is intended to save teacher jobs – *and drive policy*, and will continue to command the Department’s attention.
- ARRA has the potential to shape ELL policy and practice.
- After ARRA, there is still lots to be done and Congress is eager to define its role.

Key Policy Issues for Latinos and ELLs

Areas to watch:

- ARRA Implementation
- “Innovation”
- Early Childhood Education (ECE)
- Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA)
- Common Standards
- Funding

ARRA Implementation

\$4.35B “Race to the Top” state incentives grants program for four reform activities: (1) raising standards and improving assessments for all students, including ELLs; (2) creating better data systems to track student progress; (3) improving teacher effectiveness and equitable distribution of qualified teachers; and (4) providing intensive interventions for the lowest-performing schools.

“Innovation”

ARRA includes a \$650M “innovation fund” for Secretary Duncan to use to bring programs that work to scale. This could include more investments in early college high schools, dual-language programs, after-school programs, and other programs targeting ELL students and their teachers.

Early Childhood Education

Congress and the Department may focus on two strategies: The first would provide funding to states to incentivize collaboration and coordination of ECE services within each state. These services would include Head Start, state preschool, and child care. The goals are to leverage resources and develop a higher standard of services, e.g. to bring other services up to the “Head Start standard” of services, which is the highest.

Early Childhood Education

The second strategy is to provide grants to state Early Learning Councils. The Councils will determine ECE policies for states, including how to collaborate and coordinate, developing standards, and determining the level of community participation. It is vital that the Councils are required to develop strategies specifically aimed at ELLs and that there is ELL expertise on the Councils.

Elementary and Secondary Education

There have been very nascent discussions among Committee staff on moving NCLB this year. NCLB is viewed as a possible vehicle for a preschool proposal. It also an opportunity to strengthen connections between Title I and Title III. No one is seriously talking about a major overhaul at this point.

Common Standards

There have been nascent discussions on developing common standards. Thus far, it's very connected to the Gates Foundation's call for "fewer, clearer, higher" standards. The education advocacy community is engaging in policy development. NCLR is participating as a member of the policy committee of the Campaign for High School Equity.

Funding

Congress recently completed the appropriations bills for *fiscal year 2009*. Title III received \$730 million, which is a \$30 million increase over fiscal year 2008 (\$700 million) and \$60 million over fiscal year 2007 (\$670 million). This reverses a trend from fiscal years 2003-2007 during which Title III funding *decreased* by \$13 million.

Legislative Outlook

- The House Education and Labor Committee (Ed/Labor) has held two hearings on early childhood education. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee has held no education hearings.
- Both Ed/Labor and HELP are focused on labor, and HELP is also focused on health care reform.
- Committee staff are “listening,” and there is an opportunity to revisit *most* policies.

Keep In Touch

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Information on ARRA:

www.nclr.org/recoveryact