



# Online News

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AESA Online News

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### Stimulus Package News

#### 1. U.S. Department of Education's "ARRA Outreach" electronic newsletter

Washington, DC (March 13) -- Last weekend, Secretary Duncan announced that \$44 billion in funding from the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* (ARRA) will be available to states in the next 30-45 days. Indeed, the Department will release half the Title I, Part A aid (\$5 billion) and half the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), Parts B and C aid (\$6.1 billion) without new applications.

Also, by the end of March, governors will be able to apply for 67% (\$32.6 billion) of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund, with funding released within two weeks after acceptable applications are received.

In addition, at least \$433 million will be available under various formula-based programs, such as vocational rehabilitation (\$270 million), independent living (\$53 million), education for homeless children and youth (\$70 million), and Impact Aid school construction (\$40 million).

A second round of Title I, IDEA, and State Fiscal Stabilization Fund aid, as well as funding for other ARRA programs, will be distributed between July 1 and September 30. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/implementation.html>.

Seeking information on a particular ARRA program? The Department has released initial guidance for:

- Title I, Part A grants to school districts (<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/factsheet/title-i.html>);
- IDEA, Part B grants to states and preschool grants (<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/factsheet/idea.html>); and
- The State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/factsheet/stabilization-fund.html>).

Other ARRA program guidance and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are under development.

- Keep in mind, \$5 billion of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund has been reserved for the Secretary. This includes a \$4.35 billion "Race to the Top" fund to help drive significant gains in student achievement by supporting states making substantial progress on four key reform goals: developing rigorous college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments that are valid and reliable for all students;
- establishing preschool to college and career data systems that track progress and foster continuous improvement;
- making improvements in teacher effectiveness and in the equitable distribution of qualified teachers for all students;
- and providing intensive support and positive interventions for the lowest-performing schools. This also includes a \$650 million "Invest in What Works and Innovation" fund to help districts and non-profit organizations with a strong track record of results.

Applications for these competitive grants will be posted expeditiously. The Race to the Top grants will be made in two rounds: fall 2009 and spring 2010.

Note: Don't want to miss a thing? Get ED ARRA news by visiting [www.ed.gov/recovery/](http://www.ed.gov/recovery/) or by subscribing to the ED ARRA RSS feed at <http://www.ed.gov/rss/arracomms.xml>. If you are interested in other ED news and resources (in addition to the ARRA), subscribe to the ED RSS feed at <http://www.ed.gov/rss/edgov.xml> or track ED on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/usedgov/>.

## **2. ESA teacher loan forgiveness qualification**

AESA thanks Margaret Collins, director of development for the Hampshire Educational Collaborative of Northampton, MA for working with the U.S. Department of Education's policy office to clarify ESA teacher loan forgiveness included in the re-authorization of the Higher Education Act in August 2008. The previous law limited loan forgiveness to teachers in "schools" but that definition did not include teachers working for ESAs. The new Higher Education Act language for loan forgiveness eligible partnerships states that an entity in a partnership "may include ... an educational service agency."

Brian Talbott, AESA executive director, said, "The loan forgiveness program is very important for ESAs, not only for their current teachers but also for future teacher recruitment. The loan forgiveness program is a direct result of the hard work of the AESA Government Relations Committee and ESAs across the country, led by the efforts of Roberta Stanley in Michigan, Cynthia Woodside in New York, Bruce Hunter and Mary Kusler in Washington, DC, and congressional staff they worked with."

Following is the summary prepared by Margaret, and confirmed by the DoE policy office regarding ESA teacher loan forgiveness:

CRITERIA FOR ELIGIBILITY: Teachers who are employed by Educational Service Agencies (ESA), who have Title IV loans (known as Stafford or Perkins loans), who have been employed for 5 years in low income schools (defined as a school in which more than 30% of the total enrollment is made up of title I children) are eligible for loan forgiveness. Qualifying teaching service for loan forgiveness on Stafford loans must be performed for five consecutive years and, depending on the teaching service, a total of \$5,000 or \$17,500 in loan forgiveness is available. The five years of teaching service required to forgive a Federal Perkins loan does not need to be consecutive and may result in cancellation of the entire loan amount. Teachers receive partial cancellation of a Perkins Loan for each year of qualifying teaching service performed with 15% of the loan cancelled in the first and second years, 20% cancelled for the third and fourth years, and 30% cancelled for the fifth year.

The DOE is beginning the process of contacting all state departments of education to update the directory of eligible schools by including educational service agency schools. These updated directories are not yet available.

PROCESS FOR STAFFORD LOANS: There are two types of Stafford Loans.

1. If an ESA teacher meets the criteria and has taken a Stafford Federal Family Education Loan, the teacher should contact the lender to start the loan forgiveness application process.
2. If an ESA teacher meets the criteria and has taken a Direct Stafford Loan, the teacher should contact the U.S. DOE to start the loan forgiveness process.

PROCESS FOR PERKINS LOANS: If an ESA teacher meets the criteria and has taken a Perkins Loan, the teacher starts the loan forgiveness process at the school/higher ed institution where the loan was made.

Subsequent to Margaret's work, AESA confirmed with the staff at the DoE's policy office that it looks forward to continuing to work with AESA on this, and other issues. If your agency has questions, please send them to AESA at: [info@aesa.us](mailto:info@aesa.us). This will allow AESA to make sure that answers to policy questions are made available to all agencies through the AESA Online News.

### **AESA News**

#### **3. Submit proposals for 2009 Annual Conference concurrent sessions**

AESA invites you to submit your proposal to present at the AESA Annual Conference, December 2-5, 2009 at Austin, Texas. ESAs are invited to submit a proposal to present a one-hour session in one of five concurrent session strands centered on the conference theme: ESAs: Creating Tomorrow's Possibilities Today. The session strands are:

- **ESA Board Members:** Offer sessions on board governance and board member development that have proven successful in agencies across the country.
- **ESAs Responding to the Current Economic Climate:** Profiles thriving ESA programs that demonstrate financially prudent models of how to continue to provide worthwhile services that are affordable.
- **Delivering and Measuring Success:** Provides best practices that demonstrate proven methods with built-in accountability and evaluation of programs that increase student performance.
- **Collaboration/Community Partnerships:** Offers sessions that exemplify partnerships which assure businesses, ESAs, school districts, higher education and federal and state agencies, collaborate to build a common agenda that strengthens communication plans.

- Technology: Focuses on exceptional use of technology resulting in enhanced student performance and direct benefits to ESAs and school districts.

Proposals will be accepted through a convenient online form until midnight, May 1, 2009. Please go to the AESA website at [www.aesa.us](http://www.aesa.us) and click on the "Submit proposals for presentations now!" link under AESA Conferences to access the online form, or to download the Call for Presentations flyer.

#### **4. US Academic Decathlon seeks judges, proctors for Memphis**

The US Academic Decathlon Program began as a program of ESA member Orange County Office of Education, California, in 1968 under the direction of Dr. Robert Peterson, former Orange County Superintendent of Schools. The competition went statewide in California in 1979, and has been a national event since 1982. The program has grown over the years to where it is now classified as the Premier Academic Competition in the United States: [www.usad.org](http://www.usad.org).

The USAD program is recruiting 162 volunteers as speech and interview judges and 20 proctors for the April 22-25 2009 National Competition at Memphis, TN. The judge volunteers would need to be available on April 23 from 8 am – 5 pm. Training will take place in the morning, with judging in the afternoon. The proctors would need to be available on April 23 and 24 from 6:30 – 11:30 am. Persons interested in being a judge or proctor may contact Mylene Chafe, USAD director of operations at [mylene@usad.org](mailto:mylene@usad.org).

Currently 40 states participate in the National Competition, with over two-thousand schools participating across the nation. A unique aspect of Academic Decathlon is that it is designed to include students from all academic abilities from grades nine thru twelve. Each nine-member team consists of three "A"(Honor), three "B"(Scholastic) and three "C or below" (Varsity) students. Each student competes in ten events, which are Economics, Essay, Art, Interview, Language and Literature, Math, Music, Science, Social Science and Speech. Each year the Science or Social Science topic is designated as the Super Quiz topic.

The 10-event academic program strives to foster a greater respect for knowledge, to promote wholesome inter-school academic competition, and to further develop student communication skills. A new theme of study is established every year with topics that are relevant and challenging. Gold, silver, and bronze medals are awarded for individual events and total scores. Overall individual winners are recognized as well as champion teams. This very broad base of awards allows for major recognition of academic accomplishment. The USAD curriculum also addresses a number of National Content and Curriculum Standards, see: <http://usad.org/Curriculum/Standards.asp>.

In many schools, tryouts for team positions occur in the fall after summer study sessions. Thus, substantially more than nine students can be involved in each school's program. Teams advance through local, regional and state levels of competition. The state champions compete at the National Competition. USAD currently also hosts the Small, Medium and International Online National Competitions to bring learning, growth and recognition to more schools and students.

The National Competition is hosted in a different state each year. The 2009 National Competition will be held in Memphis, Tennessee. Over 300 volunteers, including staff from many of the USAD sponsoring organizations, are involved as judges and proctors for the competition.

### ESA News

#### 5. Requests for information from ESAs: School construction and e-library/e-media services

AESA has received requests for information from member ESAs on two topics. If you have information that may assist, please send your contact information to AESA and we will connect you with the requesting agency. Please send your information to: [info@aesa.us](mailto:info@aesa.us). The requests are for:

- Information about school construction models, samples or ideas.
- Information about ESA e-library and e-media business models, providing holistic electronic resources to school districts.

### Business Partner News

#### 6. Nova Southeastern University named top online university

AESA Business Partner Nova Southeastern University has been ranked as the top online higher education program by the Online Education Database (OEDb) Online College Rankings of 2009. The OEDb rankings are based on eight metrics: acceptance rate, financial aid, graduation rate, peer Web citations, retention rate, scholarly citations, student:faculty ratio, and years accredited. The rankings are based on each institution's overall metrics.

Joining Nova Southeastern at 1<sup>st</sup> in the ranking of 44 institutions were AESA Business Members Grand Canyon University, rated 7<sup>th</sup>; Western Governors University, rated 11<sup>th</sup>; and Walden University, rated 14<sup>th</sup>. The OEDb rankings, links to the institutions, and to the measurement metrics, are available at:

<http://oedb.org/rankings>

#### 7. Innovation In Education Series thought leaders webcasts

Promethean, an AESA Business Partner, in partnership with Cisco, continues its Innovation in Education webinar series launched in February. These informative sessions feature top thought leaders in K-12 education and are designed as a forum to discuss educational practices and solutions that work, stimulate creative thinking, and inspire transformation in education to meet the needs of the 21st Century Learner. Guests in the series will include Alan November, Dr. Robert Marzano, Debra Pickering, Grant Wiggins, Marc Prensky, Ron Clark and other education thought leaders.

The series is available online. To register for this free webcast series, please go to:

[www.prometheanplanet.com/tls2009](http://www.prometheanplanet.com/tls2009).

### New Business Members

#### 8. VIP Tone joins AESA; schedules two webinars on American Recovery and Reinvestment Act 2009 (ARRA) to fund Next-Gen services delivery infrastructure in ESAs

VIP Tone, which provides a suite of digital school services including integrated library and media services developed in partnership with ESAs in California, launches its AESA Business Membership with two free webinars focused on how ESAs can leverage the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 for infrastructure programs.

The webinars on Wednesday, March 24 at 11 am EST and Monday, March 30 at 2 pm EST, are intended for ESA superintendents and chief executive officers, chief information officers, information technology directors, and instructional media specialists and librarians. Presenters include Mark Schneiderman, director of education public policy for the Software and Information Industry Association (SIIA), Dave Paulson, executive director of instructional technology, Alameda County Office of Education; and, Robert Iskander, founder and chief executive officer, VIP Tone. Dick Moody, AESA director of business services, will introduce the webinar.

The program will offer suggestions for developing successful partnerships to implement a modern infrastructure that streamlines and automates the delivery of integrated set of library and instructional media services to schools. The proposed infrastructure may ultimately save each of the schools thousands of dollars every year by creating an automated and less labor-intensive digital media distribution system, aggregating content and software as service products from various vendors into a single on-demand delivery platform customized for every unique end-user, including teachers, students and parents. This innovative platform, developed in partnership with ESA's in California, is called the EduTone Xchange. Dave Paulson, executive director of IT at Alameda County Office of Education, will discuss the features of the EduTone Xchange platform and how it enables Alameda County to deliver an integrated solution Portal called "SynapsEd."

School superintendents around the country are looking for ways to cut costs, while still maintaining academic success. The federal government is interested in permanently improving the US elementary and secondary schools infrastructure, including anywhere/anytime access to quality education content, through one-time infrastructure investments funded by the ARRA. The mounting economic uncertainty and loss of financial resources has resulted in an increase in demand for quality online instructional resources targeting virtual schools, distance learning and professional development. Mark Schneiderman, director of education policy at SIIA, will discuss the various funding categories and grant programs within the new federal law that will enable ESAs, school districts, and schools to partner together and apply for one-time grants to fund this next generation content and software distribution highway.

You may register for the webinar online at <http://www.edutone.com/webinar> or call 866 901-8663, ext. 9007. Be one of the first 30 registrants and get a chance to win an Apple iPhone.

#### **9. American Public University offers over 100 degrees and certifications**

American Public University (APU), a new AESA Business Member, is a regionally accredited (HLC), online university that offers M.Ed. and teacher certification programs as part of its over 100 offerings at the certificate, associate, bachelor's, and master's degree level. M.Ed. programs include Administration & Supervision, and Guidance & Counseling. These programs, in addition to the teacher certification programs, often lead to certification on their own merit but are designed and approved by the West Virginia DOE to lead to certification in WV, which has reciprocity with most other states. ESAs should check with their state certification office to determine if it has a reciprocity agreement with West Virginia. The M.Ed. Teaching degree has multiple concentrations including Instructional Leadership, Special Education, Gifted Education, Reading and Literacy, and TESOL. The APUS tuition is extremely competitive. All of the APU tuition rates and fees are posted on line. Undergraduates often qualify for its book grant and benefit from an open enrollment policy. Monthly starts and weekly asynchronous assignment schedules are designed to ensure the professional, adult student a convenient path to greater knowledge and skill during these tough economic times. The APU full-service admissions, financial aid, and credit transfer team makes registering simple and easy. Visit APU at [www.apu.apus.edu](http://www.apu.apus.edu). For more information, please contact Craig Gilman at [cgilman@apus.edu](mailto:cgilman@apus.edu) or (703) 334-3957.

#### **US Department of Education Announcements: What Works Clearinghouse news**

##### **10. New reports on Dropout Prevention, Elementary School Math, Middle School Math, Primary Reading RTI,**

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) has released reports in the areas of Dropout Prevention, Elementary School Math, and Middle School Math. All of these, and other reports, are available at the What Works Clearinghouse website at:

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/>

- **Dropout Prevention:**

*I Have A Dream* is the latest WWC Dropout Prevention report. The WWC reviewed 14 studies of, the program that encourages students in low-income communities to complete high school and go on to college. Participants are provided with tutoring, mentoring, and counseling. Upon completion of high school, students receive post-secondary education tuition assistance. Access the WWC report at:

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/dropout/dream/>

*Talent Development Middle Grades Program* is a whole school reform approach for large middle schools that face serious problems with student attendance, discipline, and academic achievement. The program includes both structural and curriculum reforms. It calls for schools to reorganize into small “learning communities” of 200 to 300 students who attend classes in distinct areas of the school and stay together throughout their time in middle school. In addition to structural changes, schools adopting the program purchase one or more curricula that are intended to be developmentally appropriate and to engage students with culturally relevant content. For students who are behind in reading and math, the program provides additional periods devoted to these subjects that include group activities and computer-based lessons. To improve implementation, each school is assigned a team of “curriculum coaches” trained by the developer to work with school staff on a weekly basis to implement the program. In addition, teachers are offered professional development training, including monthly sessions designed to familiarize them with the program and demonstrate effective instructional approaches. Access the report at:

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/dropout/tdmg/index.asp>

- **Elementary Mathematics**

*Kumon Math* is the focus of a new Elementary School Math report from the WWC. This intervention is a supplemental mathematics curriculum for students in preschool through secondary school and is composed of hundreds of short assignments that progress through increasingly difficult mathematics exercises. This WWC report looks at the use of *Kumon Math* specifically in grades K-5. Access the report at:

[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/elementary\\_math/kumon/](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/elementary_math/kumon/)

*Investigations in Number, Data, and Space®*, published by Pearson Scott Foresman, is an activity-based K–5 mathematics curriculum. It is designed to help all students understand the fundamental ideas of number and operations, geometry, data, measurement, and early algebra. The curriculum encourages students to use prior knowledge to develop an understanding of fundamental mathematical ideas. *Investigations in Number, Data, and Space®* is problem-centered and de-emphasizes algorithms. Rather, the curriculum focuses on activities that encourage students to develop their own strategies for solving problems and engage in discussion about their reasoning and ideas. The curriculum at each grade level is organized into units that offer from two to eight weeks of work focused on a particular content strand, and students work in a variety of groupings, including whole class, individually, in pairs, and in small groups. Access the report at:

[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/elementary\\_math/investigations/index.asp](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/elementary_math/investigations/index.asp)

- **Middle School Mathematics**

*I CAN Learn® Pre-Algebra and Algebra*, is an updated Middle School Math intervention report. This report looks at an interactive, self-paced, mastery-based software program that is part of the *I CAN Learn® Education System*. The report has been updated to include reviews of 15 studies of *I CAN Learn® Pre-Algebra and Algebra* that have been released since 2005. Access the report at:

[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/middle\\_math/iclprea/](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/middle_math/iclprea/)

*University of Chicago School Mathematics Project (UCSMP) Algebra* is a one-year course covering three primary topics: (1) linear and quadratic expressions, sentences, and functions; (2) exponential expressions and functions; and (3) linear systems. Topics from geometry, probability, and statistics are integrated with the appropriate algebra. Problem-solving and real-world applications are used throughout to develop and maintain basic skills and concepts. Computer algebra system (CAS) technology is used in the classroom to aid in the development of properties and skills, and graphing calculators are used to complete assignments at home. Access the report at:

[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/middle\\_math/ucsmp\\_algebra/index.asp](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/middle_math/ucsmp_algebra/index.asp)

- **Response to Intervention: Reading**

*Assisting Students Struggling with Reading: Response to Intervention (RtI) and Multi-Tier Intervention in the Primary Grades* offers five specific recommendations to help educators identify struggling readers and implement evidence-based strategies to promote their reading achievement. Teachers and reading specialists can utilize these strategies to implement RtI and multi-tier intervention methods and frameworks at the classroom or school level.

Recommendations cover how to screen students for reading problems, design a multi-tier intervention program, adjust instruction to help struggling readers, and monitor student progress.

Access the report at:

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides/>