

## Senator Murkowski's Education Newsletter

For March 5, 2010

### Senate HELP Committee Hearing on Childhood Obesity

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, of which Senator Murkowski is a member, held a hearing March 4th titled, Childhood Obesity: Beginning the Dialogue on Reversing the Epidemic. Witnesses were: Dr. Regina M. Benjamin, Surgeon General of the United States; Dr. Joe Thompson, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center to Prevent Childhood Obesity;

Dr. Sandra Hassink, Chair, American Academy of Pediatrics Obesity Leadership Workgroup; and Rashard Mendenhall, Pittsburgh Steelers Running Back. Thank you to the many Alaskans who provided their comments regarding childhood obesity to Senator Murkowski.

### What Works Clearinghouse Announces Webinar and New Quick Reviews

- Quick Review of the study, "Impact of For-Profit and Nonprofit Management on Student Achievement: The Philadelphia Intervention, 2002-2008." In the summer of 2002, the Philadelphia school district contracted with private organizations to take over the management of its 46 lowest-performing elementary and middle schools. This study examined whether shifting from traditional district management to management by a for-profit or nonprofit organization improves student achievement. The study reported that, on average over the six years following the shift in school management, students in for-profit managed schools had math and reading test scores that were not significantly different from those of students in comparison schools run by the district. Learn more at:  
<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/quickreviews/ORReport.aspx?QRID=116>
- Report on the intervention, "Plato Achieve Now", a math software-based curriculum for the elementary and middle schools grades. Software-based assessments are used to customize individual instruction, allowing students to learn at their own pace with content appropriate for their skill level. One study of "Plato Achieve Now" found no discernable effects on math achievement. Based on this one study, the WWC considers the extent of evidence for this math intervention to be small for math achievement. Learn more at:  
[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/middle\\_math/plato/](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/middle_math/plato/)
- Quick Review of the IES study, "Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship program: Impacts After Three Years." This study examined whether the Opportunity Scholarship Program, which offers vouchers to students to attend private schools in Washington DC, improved the reading and math achievement of low-income students. The study authors found that, after three years, students who were offered vouchers to attend private schools scored higher on reading tests compared to students who were not offered vouchers -- gains equal to about 3 months of additional learning over three school years. The authors found no statistically significant differences in math scores. You can view the report at:



Sen. Murkowski with Josie Burton's 4th Grade Class in Nome, Alaska.



Sen. Murkowski "tells it like it is" to Education Secretary Duncan in Anchorage.



Sen. Murkowski tells stories with Bear Valley Elementary students in Anchorage.



Sen. Murkowski with students of Galena Interior Learning Academy

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<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/quickreviews/ORReport.aspx?QRID=128>

### U.S. Department of Education News Highlights

- **Race to the Top Finalists Announced:** Colorado, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Winners for Phase 1 will be chosen from among the 16 finalists and announced in April. Applications for Phase 2 are due on June 1, with finalists announced in August and winners announced in September. More information is available at <http://www2.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2010/03/03042010.html>.
- **Proposed Teacher Incentive Fund Priorities:** USED issued proposed priorities for a new a \$439 million Teacher Incentive Fund competition to support the development and implementation of performance-based compensation systems for teachers and principals. More information is available at: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/teacherincentive/applicant.html>.
- **School Standards and School Turnaround:** President Obama's proposal to require all states adopt and certify that they have college- and career-ready standards in reading in math in order to qualify for Title I funding can be found at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/president-obama-calls-new-steps-prepare-america-s-children-success-college-and-care>. The President also challenged states to identify high schools with graduation rates below 60% and discussed the Administration's new investments to turn schools around. See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/president-obama-announces-steps-reduce-dropout-rate-and-prepare-students-college-an> for more information.
- **Department's Agenda and Budget Proposal:** Secretary Duncan testified before the House Education and Labor Committee regarding the Administration's education agenda, including the Fiscal Year 2011 budget and ESEA reauthorization. You can watch the hearing at <http://edlabor.house.gov/hearings/>. Secretary Duncan also addressed the National Governor's Association regarding the Department's framework for ESEA reauthorization at <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2010/02/secretary-arne-duncan-at-the-national-governors-association-meeting/>.
- **Seclusion and Restraint:** USED has posted a summary of state laws, regulations, policies, and guidelines regarding the use of restraint and seclusion techniques in schools at: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/seclusion/seclusion-state-summary.html>.

### Teleconference with Tribal Leaders

The U.S. Department of Education will host a teleconference with tribal leaders to discuss, among other matters, reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) and the department's proposed "Plan of Action" for implementing Executive Order 13175. The teleconference will be on March 10, at 1:30 p.m. Eastern Time. More details are available at: <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2010/03/teleconference-with-tribal-leaders-on-march-10/>. If you are unable to participate, comments on the proposed Plan of Actions (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/tribalplan-2010.pdf>) may be submitted via e-mail to [Tribalconsultation@ed.gov](mailto:Tribalconsultation@ed.gov). This teleconference is different from the Listening Session being held by the Senate Indian Affairs Committee.