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Reg Leichty, Partner, EducationCounsel, Washington, D.C.

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Number of references to "Online" – "Distance Learning" – "Virtual Schools" in the Harkin-Enzi draft ESEA bill prior to mark-up.

+ Federal and national education policy is in a period of intense transition.

Although many pending proposals fail to leverage technology's full potential, several current policy trends and discrete programmatic changes

+ present important opportunities for virtual schools.

This presentation discusses those opportunities, including:

- + – ESEA Reauthorization Status and Trends**
- ESEA Flexibility Initiative**
- Important State Initiatives**
- FY12 Budget and "Super Committee"**



+ ESEA Reauthorization Status and Trends

- + The House and Senate are using different strategies for updating the ESEA, but core policy themes with implications for virtual schools are present in the debate on both sides of the Capitol.**

Recurring Themes w/VS Implications

- CCR standards and aligned systems
- Tools for Effective Teachers/Leaders



- Robust Data Systems
- States and district capacity building
- Greater focus on the lowest performing schools and "gap" schools.
- Program consolidation and elimination

Given the current political environment the new ESEA will likely include only limited direct supports for virtual schools and blended learning, but indirect + avenues may also be present for proactive (and creative) VS leaders.

**The HELP Committee's bill
renews the E2T2 program,
providing direct support for:**



- 1. virtual educator-educator
peer communities;**
- 2. online delivery of rigorous
content; and a**
- 3. major focus on online
assessment.**

The HELP bill also:

- 1. strengthens existing references to online courses and PD in the AP/IB program; and**
- 2. includes a new focus on ensuring professional development and technology supports for turning around the bottom 5% of schools.**



The HELP Committee creates a new high school reform program to personalize learning, including by:

- + "implementing competency based models."**

The HELP Committee proposes to update Title II programs to place a greater focus on:

- 1. Equitable teacher distribution;**
- + 2. Collaboration and mentoring (w/focus on matching same field, grade, subjects); and**
- 3. Principal training and support.**

Must be aligned to standards.

The HELP Committee bill would also authorize the Administration's proposed

- + "ARPA" for education...to pursue break through developments in education technology and learning systems.**

**The House Ed & Labor Committee
may consider bill(s) to update at
least Title I and Title II before
+ 2012.**

Congress is unlikely to complete action on the ESEA this year, but a small window of opportunity + may be available in early 2012.



+ ESEA Flexibility Initiative



**The Department of Education's
ESEA Flexibility initiative
represents the primary focus of
K-12 reform at the federal level.**

On 9/23, the President invited states to apply for "ESEA + flexibility" in exchange for state leadership on several college and career ready reforms.

To receive a waiver, states must:

- **Adopt and implement college and career-ready standards and aligned assessments of knowledge and skills**
- **Design and implement a rigorous statewide accountability system**
- **Design, pilot, and implement, over a number of years, a system of teacher and leader evaluation based on student achievement**
- **Evaluate and adjust state-level administrative and reporting requirements to reduce burden on districts and schools**



Key areas of flexibility include:

- **Remove AYP and 2014 timeline for achieving 100% proficiency;**
- **Remove school and district improvement requirements, including SES, choice, corrective action, restructuring, etc.; and**
- **Remove improvement plan requirements and Title I and Title II fund restrictions for districts that miss HQT requirements.**
- **States also have the option of incorporating other waiver requests, expressly including flexibility on use of 21st Century Learning Communities funds to support ELT as well as afterschool.**

Virtual schools should engage with state leaders about their waiver ideas. For example,

- **Incorporating competency based learning into next generation accountability proposals;**
- **Incorporating online and blended models into school and district improvement plans, including using SES funding;**
- **Making online teacher/leader collaboration, including virtual coaches, a core component of new evaluation and professional development programs;**
- **Incorporating online and blended learning into CCR implementation strategies.**





+ State Trends

Over 44 states and D.C. have agreed to develop next gen accountability systems consistent with nine principles that provide a pathway for an ESEA compromise or a multi-state waiver strategy (targeted).


Nine Principles

- **Align performance goals to CCR standards**
- **Annual determinations for each school and district**
- **Focus on student outcomes**
- **Continued commitment to disaggregated outcomes**
- **Reporting of timely, accessible and actionable data**
- **Deeper diagnostic reviews**
- **Building school and district capacity**
- **Targeting lowest performing schools**
- **Innovation, evaluation and continuous improvement**

Common Core implementation presents a major opportunity for better integrating online and blended models.

- + States are developing new aligned teacher prep and PD systems, new instructional tools and materials (including OER), aligned assessments, and modern frameworks for curriculum and instruction (give students credit for successful work!).**

+ Fiscal Year 2012 Budget




The FY12 budget process has been almost as challenging as the FY11 debate...more education cuts are possible.

**The "super committee's
recommendations – or lack
+ thereof - may have a long term
impact on education funding (and
policy).**

Congress is working to complete the FY12 appropriations process by moving a series of "minibuses" (small groups of

- + appropriations bills) before the holidays, but another CR will be needed keep the U.S. Ed's doors open beyond November 18.**

In short, steep federal cuts - on top of declining state budgets - could force difficult conversations about reallocating funding to educationally sound but more cost effective programs.



Given these budgetary and policy challenges, the United States must think creatively to increase graduation rates, including prioritizing high quality online learning and educator supports.

+ Thank You.

Reg Leichy

Partner

EducationCounsel, LLC

(p) 202.545.2918

(e) Reg.Leichy@EducationCounsel.com

Twitter: [@RegLeichy](https://twitter.com/RegLeichy)

