

No Light at the End of the Financial Tunnel

By Jeff Simering, Director of Legislation

State and local revenues have always been one of the last areas to improve after an economic downturn. Now, the National Governors Association projects state financial shortfalls of nearly \$175 billion through 2013 on top of the \$230 billion in budget gaps between 2009 and 2011. Local revenues, moreover, continue to fall with declining real estate values and continuing unemployment. The federal government, which provided a financial lifeline for school years 2009-10 and 2010-11 with its “stimulus” legislation, is now embroiled in setting a full-year continuing funding resolution that cuts education aid for school year 2011-12. And there is little light to be seen at the end of this very long tunnel.

The House of Representatives passed a full-year FY 2011 Continuing Resolution (H.R. 1) designed to cut \$100 billion from the federal budget in the current fiscal year after the new freshman class rejected a cut of some \$74 billion as inadequate. Specifically, H.R. 1 proposed cuts of some \$5 billion in education, not counting a reduction in the Pell Grant financial aid program for low-income college students.

The major education cuts included \$694 million (-4.8 percent) in Title I for disad-



vantaged children, and \$558 million (-4.8 percent) in IDEA for children with disabilities as well as hundreds of millions in cuts to other programs such as Title II-D Technology Education (\$100 million), Vocational Tech-Prep Education (\$102 million), and Striving Readers (\$339 million total). A House amendment ultimately restored the \$558 million in IDEA funds, but cut an additional \$336 million from School Improvement Grants and \$500 million in Title II Teacher Quality grants.

While negotiations proceed on full-year funding levels for the remaining seven months of FY 2011, Congress has now extended a short-term Continuing Resolution into mid-March along with a \$4 billion down payment on future FY 2011

budget cuts. But, one can only speculate on the total cuts in critical federal elementary and secondary education programs because the Senate has yet to take up a full-year Continuing Resolution.

Moreover, the prospects for federal education funding in future years remain uncertain. Although pledging to freeze federal domestic discretionary funds, the Obama Administration has placed a high priority on education investments, although most of the prospective increases would come in competitive rather than formula grants. And the House of Representatives has now demonstrated that cuts to most federal education programs are fair game.

Unfortunately, there is no new federal bailout to counterbalance the continuing financial problems of school districts in the next year and beyond. The threshold question is whether the federal government will maintain its historic support for poor, minority, language minority, and students with disabilities. The answer will come in the FY 2011 Continuing Resolution and the FY 2012 Budget Resolution and Appropriations bill. It is crucial that urban school districts and their constituent groups engage their congressional delegations as these essential decisions are made this year.

Cleveland District Launches Financial Literacy Program

The Cleveland Metropolitan School District recently joined forces with six Cleveland financial institutions to launch a new financial literacy education program for students.

The Making Money Matter Program (M3P) aims to not only provide students with lessons in finance and economics and introduce them to careers in the finance industry but also help to improve student test scores in math and social studies. The program’s curriculum is aligned to the district’s mathematics and social studies standards and Ohio’s Academic Achievement

Assessment.

The M3P program was the brainchild of Eugene Sanders, the recently departed CEO of the Cleveland school system, who approached officials at a local bank in an effort to spearhead a joint partnership between the financial industry and the school district.

For the past two years, a committee of bankers has worked together with school system officials to create a quality financial literacy education program. Last spring, a pilot program of the new curriculum was tested in two eighth-grade classes at R.G.

Jones School.

And last summer, a \$25,000 grant was presented to the school district to implement and expand the M3P program, which was incorporated into the curriculum of 15 classes at seven K-8 schools for the 2010-2011 school year.

Evaluation results from the program are not in yet, but students and teachers have praised the program and district officials believe the program will result in improved test scores for students.

“The need to provide a quality financial

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Atlanta Grad, Ivy Leaguer Returns to Teach

Matt Westmoreland, who graduated from Grady High School in Atlanta and subsequently went on to study and graduate from Princeton University, shares a laugh with students at Atlanta's Carver Early College. He returned to an Atlanta Public Schools classroom to teach because "I was becoming increasingly passionate about urban education," he said in the school district's newspaper. While a Grady High student in 2005, Westmoreland participated as a panelist in a Council of the Great City Schools' national town hall meeting on high school reform.

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CART was created in 1999 as a partnership between California's Fresno and Clovis school districts. Eleventh- and twelfth-grade students from 15 high schools are bused to CART where they attend classes taught by teams of instructors from both education and business.

As part of the Linked Learning education approach, CART is organized around four career clusters: professional sciences, engineering, advanced communications and global economics. Within each cluster are several career specific laboratories in which students complete industry-based projects and receive academic credit for advanced English, science, social science and technology.

More than 1,300 students are enrolled in one of 13 labs ranging from human behavior and psychology to biomedical engi-

neering and forensic science.

"CART is doing an amazing job connecting students in the classroom with relevant instruction that will inspire them to achieve academically and to motivate them to pursue higher education," said Fresno Unified Superintendent Michael Hanson. "In an increasingly competitive global market, CART is giving students a head start on skills that will actually give them an edge in the workplace."

In addition to Fresno, many big-city school districts in California are implementing the Linked Learning approach, including Los Angeles, San Diego, Sacramento and Long Beach.

The report, *A Model for Success: CART's Linked Learning Program Increases College Enrollment*, can be found at: www.irvine.org/cart

Game Design Program In Greensboro to Expand To State and Nation

Video games are a popular pastime for the nation's teens so two teachers in Guilford County Public Schools in Greensboro, N.C., have developed a video game curriculum for students.

Roy Kimmins Jr., a teacher at Weaver Academy, and Phyllis Jones, a teacher at Page High, created two courses in game design that will be used in all North Carolina schools beginning in 2012.

The courses not only will teach students how to be a video game designer, but also offer students lessons in statistics, probability, and geometry that could help them attain jobs in a growing industry. North Carolina currently ranks second in the game design field.

"Schools are looking for anything that will hook the student, keep them interested, and keep them coming back to school," said Kimmins, "and I think game design definitely fits the bill."

In addition, the courses will be made available to schools nationwide through a multi-state consortium, Education by Design (EBD), which provides ready-made courses to schools across the nation.

Kimmins and Jones will be helping EBD train other instructors in these courses. "We're setting the standard for where things are going...and could end up affecting thousands of students across the country," said Kimmins.

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education to better prepare our students for their future is more imperative than ever in today's economic climate," said Sanders in a press release. "To have the commitment to our students from the financial industry sends an encouraging message to the community that education is indeed everyone's business."