

Education Policy in an Election Year; State Markets and Opportunities

Moderator

Toni Morgan, MIND Research Institute

Panelists

Christopher Cross, Cross & Joftus

Larry Snowwhite, McGraw-Hill Education

Ben Wallerstein, Dutko Worldwide, LLC

Christopher Cross, a federal policy expert, began the discussion with thoughts about Senator Ted Kennedy, who recently had an undiagnosed seizure. Kennedy is the ranking Senator on the Health, Labor, and Education Committee. Cross described Kennedy as the driving force behind education policy in the Senate and commended him for his role in the creation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Chris Dodd is the next ranking member from Connecticut (a state that recently filed suit against the NCLB law). Next ranking senator after Dodd is Tom Harkin from Iowa.

Cross stated that the current brand of NCLB won't survive, citing Congressman George Miller lack of support for the law. In its current state, the law may face extinction, undermined by a potential reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The civil rights delineated in NCLB will, Cross said, be retained at the insistence of civil rights groups—the federal role since 1965 has been to look after special groups. Now is the time to think in terms of incentives rather than sanctions.

Cross then discussed the battles over federal standards, notably the significant public aversion to them: history standards done at UCLA in 1994-1995 caused a great outcry from many groups. In response, the senate passed a resolution denouncing them. The state departments of education, however, don't have the capacity for the tasks they need to accomplish; they need the federal government. Cross cited the growth model as an example of state-level shortcomings and a source of great tension among civil rights groups.

The current presidential candidates, Cross lamented, do not support the NCLB and have not taken promising stances regarding education—Obama's 14-page policy is largely irrelevant and Clinton has failed to produce much of a stance at all. Can U.S. education climb out of the silos into which it has fallen? Cross remarked on the potential reauthorization of the Institute for Education Sciences (IES).

Ben Wallerstein began to speak about the significance of state policy. What can the education industry do to shape policy? In order to generate influence and sales, he argued, companies must play a major role in the formulation and realization of education policy. The education industry is currently behind the curve in setting education policy.

He then discussed the 2008 State Governors' addresses. 96% of governors described initiatives to improve education and 64% emphasized role of education in state's economy.

The most common topics addressed included:

- o Higher education
- o K-12 teachers
- o Workforce for adults
- o Teachers
- o School finance
- o Early childhood education

- High school reform
- Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education
- Student academic support

Larry Snowwhite began his segment with a reminder that the market for the education industry is made and controlled by the government. The industry depends on people (i.e. Mark Schneiderman) who work policy on the hill. The major concern for the industry is developing a product and then hoping that the states will be able to produce money for it—presently, states put out a Request for Proposal (RFP), companies spend lots of money preparing to respond to it, and states withdraw the RFP when they realize they don't have any money.

Snowwhite named continuity as the biggest issue this election year-- new legislators, he said, won't be familiar with NCLB and the Department of Education will face challenges as new people take over many of the top positions

What is consensus of testing being around in 2009? Cross responded that testing is a question of civil rights and therefore must be maintained.