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Policy Update: April 2018

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SRCD News Related to Child and Family Policy

Register Now: Upcoming Webinar on Coding as a Developmental Playground

Title: Coding as a Developmental Playground: Computational Thinking and Robotics in Early Childhood

Date: Thursday, May 3

Time: 1:00-2:00 PM Eastern

Description: Dr. Marina Umaschi Bers is a professor at the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study and Human Development and the Computer Science Department at Tufts University. She heads the

interdisciplinary Developmental Technologies research group. Her research involves the design and study of innovative learning technologies to promote children's positive development.

In this webinar, Dr. Bers will present an overview of her interdisciplinary research program by using the metaphor of playgrounds vs. playpens to understand the role of technology in children's lives. Playgrounds are popular spaces for young children to play and learn. They are designed to promote exploration of the physical environment and the development of motor and social skills. Young children can be autonomous while developing different sets of competencies. Playpens, in contrast to playgrounds, corral children into a safe, confined space. Although they are mostly risk-free, there is little exploration and imaginative play. From a developmental perspective, the playground promotes, while the playpen hinders, a sense of mastery, creativity, self-confidence, social awareness, and open exploration. This presentation will use the playpen/playground metaphor to explore the role of coding and computational thinking for young children. Dr. Bers will introduce a framework of powerful ideas of computer science and engineering that are developmentally appropriate for young children and will provide examples involving the two environments she created, the free Scratch Jr programming language and the screen-free KIBO robotic kit that can be programmed with wooden blocks. The webinar will cover ideas from her recent book "Coding as a Playground" where she argues that coding should be seen not only as a technical skill but as a new literacy—a new way for children to express and share their ideas. As a literacy, it carries power to change the world.

Click here to register for this webinar

Spotlight on the SRCD Policy Fellow

Sarah Blankenship, Ph.D., is an Executive Branch Fellow whose placement is in the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families. Click here to learn more about her work, including her role with the Child Care Research Scholars dissertation grants.

Legislative Branch Updates

FY18 Appropriations Update: $1.3 Trillion Omnibus Spending Package Passes

On March 23 the president signed a massive $1.3 trillion omnibus spending package to fund the federal government through the end of fiscal year 2018. The legislation was passed on an extremely short timeline, narrowly avoiding another government shutdown. The bill text was not released until late on March 21,

followed by House passage on March 22 and Senate passage in the early hours of March 23 before going to the president. This bill, H.R. 1625, includes all 12 individual appropriations bills and is seen as largely positive for scientific research. Many agencies and accounts saw increases in funding following the bipartisan budget deal passed in February that raised spending caps (see February 2018 Policy Update for more information). Details on FY18 funding for research agencies that may be of particular interest to SRCD members are outlined below:

- The omnibus provides $37.084 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an increase of 8.8 percent over the FY17 enacted level. The *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) received $1.45 billion, an increase of 5.2 percent over the FY17 enacted level. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) received $1.38 billion, an increase of 26.8 percent over the FY17 enacted level. NIDA's funding increase is largely due to a $500 million funding boost for research on opioid addiction.
- The omnibus provides $613.5 million for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), an increase of 1.3 percent over the FY17 enacted level.
- The omnibus provides $7.767 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF), an increase of 3.9 percent over the FY17 enacted level. $6.33 billion is allocated to Research and Related Activities, which is where most of NSF's competitive research programs reside. The omnibus does not include language dictating funding by NSF directorate.

Additional analysis of the full FY18 omnibus appropriations bill is available from COSSA.

The passage of this omnibus package marks the end of the FY18 appropriations process, which involved five continuing resolutions to provide stopgap government funding and two brief government shutdowns. Congress will now turn its attention to the appropriations process for fiscal year 2019, which begins on October 1.

Senate Committee Hearing on Opioid Crisis Response Act

On April 11, the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) held a full committee hearing entitled "The Opioid Crisis Response Act of 2018" to discuss the recently released legislative package on responding to the opioid crisis. The HELP Committee intends to mark up and report the legislation to the full Senate in the next week. Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) used his opening statement to discuss some of the consequences of the opioid crisis that he has seen in his home state, including increasing numbers of

children born in withdrawal from opioids. He further articulated the difficulty of addressing the crisis since it "is not something that can be undertaken by a single agency…it will require all hands on deck work and solutions from states, communities, and local partners." He continued, noting that the "response from the federal government must be bipartisan, urgent, and effective." Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA) used her opening remarks to summarize the perspectives of many stakeholders that the HELP Committee has heard from so far in its previous hearings on the opioid crisis and to outline the many ways the proposed legislation addresses various facets of the epidemic. She further noted that "this bill is a testament to the value of listening and we're not done listening yet…we are committed to working together with stakeholders to help make sure we can include as many of the good ideas out there as possible."

Witnesses and members of the committee addressed a variety of topics, including: the need for further grants and technical assistance supports to states to help them implement plans of safe care for infants with prenatal substance exposure; the increased workforce needs related to both treating those with substance use disorder and providing mental health services to families impacted; the importance of maintaining investments in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA); the importance of the federal government coordinating with state alcohol and drug agencies to promote efficiency, effectiveness, and to avoid creating duplicative systems of care; the potential of non-addictive painkillers, which Senator Alexander referred to as the "holy grail of solving the opioid crisis"; and personal stories of the individuals and families impacted by the opioid crisis. Witnesses included: Jennifer Donahue, Esq., Child Abuse Investigation Coordinator, Delaware Office of the Child Advocate; Robert I.L. Morrison, Executive Director, National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors; and Jessica Hulsey Nickel, President and CEO, Addiction Policy Forum. Click here to watch the full hearing and read witness testimony.

Congressional Briefing on Innovation in Higher Education

On March 22, Results For America (RFA), America Forward, and Knowledge Alliance hosted a briefing entitled "Innovation in Higher Education: How Data & Evidence Can Improve Student Outcomes" in light of RFA's recently released bipartisan report "Moneyball for Higher Education" and the upcoming Higher Education Act (HEA) reauthorization. The briefing began with a presentation on Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP), an evidence-based model that doubled community college graduation rates from the City University of New York through providing a variety of financial, academic, and personal supports such as MetroCards and additional financial assistance, dedicated and comprehensive advising, and more flexible class scheduling options. A panel then discussed strategies for promoting similar innovative models in

higher education through methods such as adapting the tiered evidence model from ESSA to higher education, where the federal government provides funding for innovative new ideas and then replicates programs that show evidence of working. This model provides more flexibility as the evidence is built first and then the programs are scaled. The panelists were then asked to provide recommendations for the HEA reauthorization, some of which included: funding comprehensive and long-lasting programs that address multiple barriers to higher education completion; investing in ways to collect data and measure outcomes on a regular basis; low cost solutions such as advising through text messaging; creating an innovation fund that mirrors ESSA's innovation fund for K-12; and fostering institutional responsibility by providing resources to colleges to produce their own outcomes by participating in data driven improvement. Speakers included: U.S. Representative Grace Meng (D-NY-6); Lanae Erickson Hatalsky, Vice President of Social Policy & Politics, Third Way; Greg Johnson, CEO, Bottom Line; James Kvaal, President, The Institute for College Access and Success; Michael J. Weiss, Senior Associate, MDRC; Nicole Truhe, Director, Government Affairs, America Forward; and Jeremy Ayers, Vice President of Policy, Results for America.

Congressional Briefing on the Influence of Public Schools on Educational Inequality

On March 22, The American Academy of Political & Social Science (AAPSS) and the American Educational Research Association (AERA) held a congressional briefing entitled "In the Age of Inequality, Does Public Schooling Make a Difference?" revisiting many of the issues that had been raised in the Coleman Report, released just over 50 years ago. A panel of experts discussed the state of research on education inequality since the original report. The first panelist, Heather Hill of Harvard University, pointed to the importance of federally funded longitudinal datasets in advancing education research, as well as the importance of measuring school readiness. Sean Reardon of Stanford University then presented evidence on the complicated nature of school influence on academic outcomes. In his research, he has identified school districts where students tend to have low test scores in third grade (which prior research has found to be related to low socioeconomic resources or low early opportunity), and then little improvement in test scores through eighth grade (low growth), while other districts exhibit low opportunity and high growth, high opportunity and low growth, or high opportunity and high growth. He pointed to future directions for the research, including targeting what high growth districts are doing to improve outcomes despite lack of early opportunity.

Susan Moffitt of Brown University spoke about policies that have been shown to improve outcomes, including federal early investment through programs such as Head Start, nutrition assistance, and home

visiting; investing across age ranges, where the effects of early childhood education are larger when coupled with spending on K-12; providing parents tools to extend learning to the home through low cost technology; and supporting teachers' professional development. The last panelist, Prudence Carter of the University of California, Berkeley, spoke about opportunity gaps and the enduring effects of structural issues such as poverty and racism on student outcomes. Specifically, she pointed to unequal outcomes for African American students even in high performing schools. She suggested creating multiple indicators of student well-being beyond test scores, a greater recognition of systems level inequalities in federal policymaking, and a focus on improving school climate and culture to encourage persistence, especially among minority students. In addition to the panelists mentioned above, Sarah Dockery Sparks, Assistant Editor and Research Reporter at Education Week, served as a moderator, and Thomas A. Kecskemethy, Executive Director of AAPSS and Felice J. Levine, Executive Director of AERA provided opening and closing remarks. For resources from this briefing, including a webcast and slides, click here.

Congressional Briefing on School Violence, Safety, and Well-Being

On March 23, the National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives hosted a congressional briefing entitled "School Violence, Safety, and Well-Being: A Comprehensive Approach." This event, held the day before the student-led March for Our Lives, brought together researchers, practitioners, and advocates to discuss not only the impact that school shootings and other violent events have on students, but also ways to create safe, positive, and respectful school climates that can support the well-being of all students. Speakers discussed an array of topics including: promotion of healthy school cultures; identifying and effectively responding to early warning signs of violence; the use of evidence-based school threat assessment; best practices for recovery from loss when violence does take place; and the role of sensible gun legislation in violence prevention. Multiple presenters emphasized the importance of *preventing* shootings, rather than just *preparing* for them and that currently we waste a lot of resources by only reacting when violence happens, rather than focusing on preventing the violence in the first place. The briefing also included parent and student voices. Dr. Julie Phillips Pollack, stepmother of one of the 17 victims of the shooting at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, discussed the life and legacy of her stepdaughter Meadow and the impact of the shooting on her as a parent and emergency physician. Lauren Hogg, a freshman and student activist at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas, provided a first-hand account of the shooting, demanded action on gun violence, and discussed why school safety and climate are important to her, noting that most schools are not adequately addressing the social, emotional, and mental health needs of their students. Additional resources from this briefing, including short videos of each presentation,

PowerPoint slides, and additional resources related to school climate and safety are available here. To watch the full two-hour archived C-SPAN coverage of this event, click here.

Congressional Briefing on Solutions to Child Poverty in the U.S.

On April 12, the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), in collaboration with congressional sponsor Representative Ben Ray Luján (D-NM) hosted a congressional briefing entitled "Our Kids, Our Future: Solutions to Child Poverty in the U.S." Michelle Dallafior, Vice President of Budget for First Focus, opened the briefing by discussing the background of CPAG and providing some statistics on the current state of child poverty in the United States. She noted that CPAG was created to encourage a national dialogue on child poverty and that that the recently released compendiumon which the briefing focused was created as a "one stop shop" that covers a number of policy issues related to child poverty. Representative Luján then spoke, stating that "poverty is the greatest threat to our kids" and "Congress must do more" to address child poverty, as this should not be a partisan issue. He discussed how Medicare and Social Security helped dramatically reduce senior poverty in the U.S. and that we need to get serious about addressing child poverty in a similar way. Panelists then presented on selected topics that are addressed in more detail in the compendium, including child allowances, creating the political will to reduce child poverty, universal paid family leave, and early childhood development programs administered at the local and county level. All panelists emphasized that there is a large body of evidence from other countries as well as U.S. states and localities on innovative ways to reduce child poverty. Panelists included: Andy Stettner, Senior Fellow, The Century Foundation; Cara Baldari, Senior Policy Director of Family Economics, First Focus; Suma Setty, Research Associate, National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health; and Eryn Hurley, Associate Legislative Director, Human Services and Education, National Association of Counties. The full *Our Kids, Our Future: Solutions to Child Poverty in the U.S.* compendium is available here. An archived webcast, slides, and photos from the briefing are available here.

Congressional Briefing on Evidence Use in Congress

On April 11, the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) hosted a congressional briefing entitled "Evidence in Congress: Charting a New Direction for Using Evidence to Inform Legislative Decision-Making." The first part of the briefing featured Sandy Davis, Senior Advisor at BPC and Tim Shaw, Senior Policy Analyst at BPC, authors of the recently released BPC report, *Evidence Use in Congress*. The authors discussed the three challenges they identified in using evidence in Congress: perceptions of the utility of evidence, institutional

barriers related to staffing structure and decision-making process, and systematic barriers related to norms and procedures. The authors then went through the options outlined in the report to address these barriers, drawing attention to capacity building options such as creating a congressional evidence fellowship to provide timely, relevant evidence on specific legislation and establishing a database of evidence-building programs; institutional modification options including establishing a Joint Committee on Evidence to provide oversight of executive branch evidence-building; and process changing options such as establishing biennial evidence plans, which would be timed with the beginning of each congressional session to provide lawmakers research and data priorities that align with upcoming program reauthorizations.

A panel of experts with experience working in Congress then provided their perspectives on the options in the report. Topics covered included: models of successful evidence-based legislation, such as the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program; support for several highly feasible options from the report, such as creation of an evidence database for Congress and an evidence fellowship; creating a culture of innovation in Congress, where many options can be tested and there is acceptance of failure; mitigating the use of evidence as a political weapon through understanding that perfect evidence, policy, and programming will never exist; and fostering better translational skills in the research community so that information can be presented as digestible, timely to the legislative schedule, and with awareness of the realities of incremental policy change and the need for frequent updating. Panelists included Alaina Flannigan, Ph.D., SRCD/AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow; Holly Harvey, Former Assistant Director for Budget Analysis, Congressional Budget Office; and Ryan Martin, Republican Staff, Senate Finance Committee. A webcast of the briefing is available here.

Executive Branch Updates

Mark Schneider confirmed as Director of IES

On March 22, the Senate confirmed Mark Schneider as Director of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) by voice vote. Prior to being confirmed as IES Director, Dr. Schneider was Vice President and Institute Fellow at the American Institutes for Research and President of AIR's College Measures Center, and a Visiting Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. He has also previously served as Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics within IES.

NIH Holds *All of Us* Research Priorities Workshop

On March 21-23, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) held a workshop on the *All of Us*Research Program (agenda and videos of plenary sessions are available here). The aim of the workshop was to gather input on key research priorities and associated data requirements that should be considered in developing the *All of Us* data collection protocols, laying the groundwork to make it an exceptionally useful data resource.

- In opening remarks, Dr. Francis Collins, Director of NIH, explained that *All of Us* is a major component of the Precision Medicine Initiative, funded by Congress over a ten-year period through the 21st Century Cures Act. The Precision Medicine Initiative will take into account variability in genes, environment and lifestyle to refine our understanding of health outcomes. The *All of Us* initiative seeks to build a robust and widely available research resource by collecting and curating health related data and biospecimens from over one million "participant partners" reflecting the diversity of the U.S. to inform the development of more individually tailored prevention and treatment strategies. The time for such a cohort study is considered favorable given recent steps forward in genomics, safeguards for data security and privacy, analyses of large datasets, and health information technology.
- Eric Dishman, Director of the *All of Us* Research Program, described the development of data collection protocols for beta testing that is already in progress and that will involve over 30,000 individuals. 800 "use cases" have been collected through requests for input identifying key research priorities and data collection requirements. The goal of this workshop was to substantially expand the number and range of such use cases to inform the refinement of data collection protocols to be initiated in spring of 2018 as well as future waves of data collection. Many new use cases were generated at the workshop through small group sessions focusing on specific health conditions, environmental factors, human development and aging, data gathering technologies, ethical issues and statistical innovations.
- >Participant voices were present at the meeting, and the distinctive role of participants in the*All of Us* Program was stressed during multiple presentations. Participants are helping shape the priorities of the research program and will not only be sharing but also will be receiving back information as the study progresses.
- Of particular importance for SRCD members, child enrollment has always been part of the scientific vision of the *All of Us* Program, seen as critical for understanding the trajectory of adult health and disease outcomes as well as for addressing health issues specific to childhood. However, additional time is needed to develop a thoughtful and appropriate approach to including pediatric populations given the need to address issues of the rights, safety, and welfare of child research participants. As a result, the initial Spring of 2018 data collection will include only adults over 18. A December 2017

report by the Child Enrollment Scientific Vision Working Group of the *All of Us* Research Program Advisory Panel (which includes several SRCD members) lays out both the important potential and the challenges associated with including child participants in the *All of Us* Program.

Federal Reports and Requests

Reports

New Reports and Briefs from the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation

Several new publications are available from the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

(1) Parents and Children Together: The Complex Needs of Low-Income Men and How Responsible Fatherhood Programs Address Them This report examines the characteristics of fathers who voluntarily enrolled in fatherhood programs, how the programs were designed and implemented, and how fathers responded to the programs.

(2) Research and Evaluation Capacity: Self-Assessment Tool and Discussion Guide for CCDF Lead Agencies This self-assessment and discussion tool is designed to support CCDF Lead Agencies interested in strengthening their capacity to carry out and use research.

(3) The Effects of Subsidized and Transitional Employment Programs on Non-economic Well-Being This report uses data from the Subsidized and Transitional Employment Demonstration (STED) to look at the effects of the employment programs on nonfinancial well-being.

(4) Final Report: National Implementation Evaluation of the First Round Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG 1.0) This is the final report of the National Implementation Evaluation (NIE) of the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG), which provide education and training to TANF recipients in occupations in the healthcare field that pay well or are in high demand.

*(5) Descriptive Evaluation Design Report for the National and Tribal Evaluation of HPOG 2.0*This report presents a research plan for the Descriptive Evaluation of the HPOG 2.0 program, describing the implementation, outcome, and systems studies.

(6) Using a "Road Test" to Improve Human Services Programs This brief explains the "road test" approach to program improvement in the human services field.

(7) Portfolio of Research in Welfare and Family Self-Sufficiency: Fiscal Year 2017 This portfolio of research includes descriptions of all active or newly funded OPRE Division of Economic Independence projects in 2017.

(8) Self-Regulation Snap Shot #1: A Focus on Infants and Toddlers This snapshot summarizes key concepts about self-regulation development and interventions for infants and toddlers.

(9) Self-Regulation Snap Shot #2: A Focus on Preschool-Aged Children This snapshotsummarizes key concepts about self-regulation development and interventions for preschool-aged children.

(10) Self-Regulation Snap Shot #3: A Focus on Elementary-Aged Children This snapshotsummarizes key concepts about self-regulation development and interventions for elementary-aged children.

(11) Self-Regulation Snap Shot #4: A Focus on Middle-School Aged Youth This snapshotsummarizes key concepts about self-regulation development and interventions for middle-school aged youth.

(12) Self-Regulation Snap Shot #5: A Focus on High-School Aged Youth This snapshotsummarizes key concepts about self-regulation development and interventions for high-school aged youth.

(13) Self-Regulation Snap Shot #6: A Focus on Young Adults This snapshot summarizes key concepts about self-regulation development and interventions for young adults.

(14) Design for an Impact Study of Five Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education Programs and Strategies This report describes the design of The Strengthening Relationship Education and Marriage Services (STREAMS) evaluation.

New Reports from the Institute of Education Sciences

Several new reports are available from the National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Department of Education:

(1) School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) This product provides new data on crime, discipline, and safety in public schools.

(2) Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2017 This annual report presents data on crime at school from a variety of different perspectives and surveys to cover topics such as victimization, bullying, drug use, and perception of safety at school.

(3) Preparation and Support for Teachers in Public Schools: Reflections on the First Year of Teaching This brief presents findings on preparation and supports provided for early-career teachers.

(4) The Nation's Report Card: 2017 Mathematics and Reading at Grades 4 and 8 This reportpresents the results for fourth and eighth grade students who participated in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2017 mathematics and reading assessments.

Federal Funding Opportunities

This month's FFO highlights an Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) opportunity to support methodologically rigorous research and evaluations with practical implications for government-funded juvenile reentry approaches including in the areas of, but not limited to: screening and assessment, behavioral management, organizational or institutional capacity and structure, cross-system services and coordination, post-release services and supervision, and family engagement and support. OJJDP is particularly interested in studies that focus on effective strategies for juveniles with co-occurring substance abuse and mental health issues; gang involved juveniles; and older juveniles or young adults who are returning to communities struggling with violence and crime. Completed applications are due by May 31, 2018. There are several other relevant OJJDP opportunities in this month's FFO. Click here to read about these and other funding opportunities.