



# EPEC Update

**Education Policy and Evaluation Center  
University of Georgia**

**Impacting education  
policy and improving  
the quality of  
education through  
research and  
evaluation**

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## **EPEC Launches Newsletter**

The Education Policy and Evaluation Center (EPEC) will be publishing a bimonthly newsletter on the 1st and 15th of each month to keep COE faculty and other interested parties abreast of the work of the center with information related to policy issues and potential research funding opportunities. Previously, this information has been coming to COE faculty via emails from the EPEC's director, Dr. Andy Horne. Feedback from faculty made it clear that this information was of value but could be better digested in a more "reader-friendly" format.

We hope you find this information useful and welcome any feedback on format and content. We are also in the process of revamping our website and will have the newsletter there as well.

## **Policy Update**

### **Results of the NAEP 2007 Mathematics and Reading Results Just Released!**

*The Nations Report Card: Reading 2007* and *The Nations Report Card: Mathematics 2007* report national and state-level performance of fourth- and eighth-graders. National data are compared to previous assessments in 2005 in both subjects and 1992 in reading and 1990 in mathematics.

In a press release on *The Nation's Report Card* data dated September 25, 2007, Secretary Spellings stated, "To those who would suggest that No Child Left Behind is not working, our nation's 4th- and 8th-graders and their teachers just proved the naysayers wrong." Spellings added, "Math scores for 4th- and 8th-graders and the reading scores for 4th-graders are at historic highs, and the biggest gains were made by African-American and Hispanic students."

"What President Bush has proposed in his reauthorization plan for No Child Left Behind is the right direction," said Spellings. "It provides parents more information and options to make the right educational decisions for their children; it gives states and schools more effective ways to target resources and interventions where they're needed most; and it gives educators more incentives to teach in our most challenging educational environments."

For complete results and to download the report, visit: <http://nationsreportcard.gov>

The Nation's Report Card: Reading 2007: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/main2007/2007496.asp>

The Nation's Report Card: Mathematics 2007: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/main2007/2007494.asp>

### **Inside this issue:**

<b>Program Evaluation Group</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Task Group Projects</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Funding Opportunities</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>About EPEC</b>	<b>4</b>

## Introducing the Program Evaluation Group (PEG)

The Occupational Research Group (ORG) at UGA is now called the Program Evaluation Group (PEG) and is part of the new Education Policy and Evaluation Center (EPEC). This move reflects the expanded interest and expertise in program evaluation that we have developed over the years. For the past 15 years, ORG has worked collaboratively with district, state, national, and international agencies in the development and continuous improvement of education, focusing on workforce preparation, lifelong learning, and connections between education and economic development. In recent years, our scope of work has increasingly involved evaluating educational programs and school reform initiatives, many related to No Child Left Behind.

Research and evaluation studies conducted by ORG encompass a spectrum of educational issues and programs (for detailed information and report access go to <http://www.coe.uga.edu/EPEC/> and click on *Research Projects and Reports*). Following is a brief synopsis of ORG projects undertaken during the past five years, some which continue as PEG projects in the Education Policy and Evaluation Center.

**Reading First (RF):** External evaluator for 150 RF-funded schools (two cohorts) in Georgia to assess implementation, progress, and impact of Reading First program. Evaluation included onsite observation visits to K-3 classrooms in each RF school each year; monthly online surveys of Literacy Coaches at each school; annual statewide surveys of RF school principals, teachers, Literacy Coaches, parents, and Regional Coordinators; and analysis of student test data on multiple reading measures (2004-2008)

**Supplemental Education Services (SES):** Conducted annual statewide evaluation of SES. Collected, analyzed, and reported statewide data from all schools in Georgia offering SES each year, including surveys of parents, students, Title I directors, and SES providers. Evaluated stakeholder information and student achievement test data to assess SES provider effectiveness, contribution to achievement, and quality of service. (2003-2007)

**Comprehensive School Reform (CSR):** External evaluator for CSR-funded K-12 schools throughout Georgia to assess implementation, progress, impact, and sustainability of CSR strategies in the schools. Evaluation included onsite observation visits to 82 CSR schools to interview stakeholders and assess program implementation; analysis of student achievement test results in CSR schools; and surveys of CSR school administrators, teachers, and parents. (2005-2007)

**Dual Enrollment:** Employed multiple research methods in a four-phase study to answer the question: Do credit-based transition programs facilitate college access and success for students who participate in them? Series of studies included site visits, case studies, stakeholder surveys, interviews and focus groups, and student data analyses addressing impact of dual enrollment on high school student transition to postsecondary education. (2003-2007)

**School-To-Work (STW):** Multi-layered project undertaken to document and assess Georgia's progress in building school-to-work systems congruent with the state vision and guiding principles. Assessments included surveys, interviews, document review, and onsite visits focused on achievements of local STW school partnerships and projects, youth development strategies, and accountability reporting by state career-technical education agencies. Assisted STW partnerships to develop and use evaluation plans. (2002-2006)

**Research to Improve the Quality of Postsecondary Technical Education in Georgia:** Collaborative, multiple projects undertaken over a period of years to address pertinent issues in postsecondary technical education and workforce education; conducted research studies, program evaluations, and data collection and analysis for state staff at DTAE and the technical colleges in Georgia. (2000-2005)

**Next Generation School Projects (NGSP), Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education:** Collected and analyzed data on student progress on academic achievement tests and broader outcome indicators in school systems funded by NGSP to enhance student achievement through continuous improvement and assessment processes, including after-school and inter-session extended instruction programs. (1999-2005)

### PEG Services:

- Design of evaluation studies required by funding agencies
- Survey Design, administration and analysis
- Interview and focus groups data collection
- Case study research
- Analysis of student achievement test data
- Compiling and analyzing large datasets
- Technical report preparation for funding agencies
- User-friendly presentation of findings

## EPEC Task Group Projects

A small internal grant has been obtained to facilitate collaboration and program development among faculty interested in educational policy and evaluation. EPEC is proposing six project groups to serve during the 2007–2008 academic year. The goal of the groups will be to identify issues of mutual interest that have relevance to EPEC, develop an educational brief and paper that may be made available on the website, and initiate research proposals or contracts that will provide ongoing funding and support for the project developed. The following categories of interest have been identified by EPEC and several affiliated faculty members have volunteered to be the contacts for getting the groups going.

- School Finance (Cathy Sielke, [csielke@uga.edu](mailto:csielke@uga.edu))
- Assessment/testing (Jonathan Templin, [jtemplin@uga.edu](mailto:jtemplin@uga.edu))
- High School Leavers (dropouts) (Elizabeth DeBray-Pelot, [edebray@uga.edu](mailto:edebray@uga.edu))
- Adolescent literacy (Elizabeth DeBray-Pelot, [edebray@uga.edu](mailto:edebray@uga.edu))
- Public School Choice (impact by SES, race); Charter Schools, Home Schooling (Sheneka Williams, [smwill@uga.edu](mailto:smwill@uga.edu))
- Pre-K/School Readiness (Cindy Vail, [cvail@uga.edu](mailto:cvail@uga.edu))
- Comprehensive School Reform (Gayle Andrews, [gandrews@uga.edu](mailto:gandrews@uga.edu))
- Aggression/violence/bullying (Andy Horne, [ahorne@uga.edu](mailto:ahorne@uga.edu))
- English Language Learners (Elizabeth DeBray-Pelot, [edebray@uga.edu](mailto:edebray@uga.edu))
- Other task groups that participants are interested in developing (Andy Horne)

Related to the task groups, there will be some level of funding to provide resources and support for the groups to develop educational briefs, programs for implementation, and research proposals.

### Action steps for participation in the EPEC Task Group Projects:

1. Contact the faculty member listed to express your interest by **October 15** or
2. Contact Andy Horne ([ahorne@uga.edu](mailto:ahorne@uga.edu)) if you have another area of interest and can identify potential group members. Depending on the response, we may be able to fund additional groups.

## Funding Opportunities

Jean Bowen ([jsbowen@uga.edu](mailto:jsbowen@uga.edu)) is busy supporting EPEC and the COE faculty searching for funding opportunities. In addition to emails Jean sends out, EPEC Update will feature potential funding opportunities. This week's opportunity:

**Healthy Youth!** - Improving Health and Educational Outcomes of Young People  
 CDC announces the availability of fiscal year (FY) 2008 funds for cooperative agreements between the CDC and State Education Agencies (SEA), State Health Agencies (SHA), Territorial Education Agencies (TEA), Federally Recognized American Indian/Alaska Native Tribal Governments (TG), and large urban Local Education Agencies (LEA) to improve health and educational outcomes of young people through establishing and strengthening coordinated school health programs. Tribal governments are defined as an American Indian or Alaska Native tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, or community that the Secretary of the Interior acknowledges to exist as an Indian tribe pursuant to the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994, 25 USC 479a. (<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/FOA-801>)

## Task Groups

- School Finance
- Assessment/Testing
- High School Leavers
- Adolescent Literacy
- School Choice
- School Readiness
- School Reform
- Violence Prevention
- English Language Learners

## Important Date:

Express your interest in a task group by **Oct. 15**

## Healthy Youth!

**Application deadline:**

**Nov. 21, 2007**

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## About EPEC

### Policy Research Group

The Policy Research Group within EPEC aims to provide resources to faculty seeking to share the results of their research studies with the policy community in the state. Dr. Elizabeth DeBray-Pelot ([edebray@uga.edu](mailto:edebray@uga.edu)), Associate Director, and Dr. Sheneka Williams ([smwill@uga.edu](mailto:smwill@uga.edu)), Policy Research Fellow, are available to faculty to assist with writing policy briefs for prospective posting on the Center website and distribution to state policymakers.

The Policy Research Group is currently soliciting faculty members' working papers for posting on the Center website. These are generally papers that have been submitted to a scholarly journal for review or have been presented at a conference. The PRG is also interested in talking to faculty conducting policy-related research that could be featured in the policy section of the website.

### Program Evaluation Group

The Program Evaluation Group within EPEC offers rigorous program evaluation, technical assistance, data collection, and information analysis for a variety of public and private stakeholder agencies, foundations, and institutions on local, state, national, and international levels. PEG core staff, under the direction of Dr. Dorothy Harnish, is comprised of professional staff skilled in carrying out multiple projects utilizing various research methods to assess the need for educational programs and their impact and effectiveness.

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