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I conceive that the great part of the miseries of mankind are brought upon them by false estimates they have made of the value of things.

Benjamin Franklin

College Board Unveils New SAT Test

On March 5, the College Board [introduced](#) the newly redesigned SAT that students will take starting in 2016. The premier college entrance exam, which has not undergone a major revision since 2005, has been retooled to provide “worthy challenges, not artificial obstacles” according to College Board President David Coleman. According to the College Board website, the goals of the new test are to propel all students forward, provide free test preparation for the world, promote excellence in classroom coursework, and support low-performing students. The new test differs from the previous assessment in several major ways: the written essay portion is optional, the penalty for wrong answers has been removed, more accessible vocabulary will be used throughout the test, and the test can be taken on a computer. In the English portion, students will be asked to analyze America’s founding documents—the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. On the mathematics portion, there will be a more tailored focus on algebra skills, and calculators will be prohibited on some sections. In addition, the test will revert to the original 1600 point scale. Mr. Coleman announced that the College Board will partner with [Khan Academy](#), a non-profit that seeks to provide a free world class education to all, to offer free test preparation materials and online helps. The effect of this partnership on the \$1 billion, for-profit test preparation industry, which includes companies such as Kaplan, remains to be seen. Furthermore, Mr. Coleman expressed a desire to remove obstacles for children who have been unable to take advantage of these services in the past. In keeping with the goal of helping students from low-income households, the group will also provide four fee waivers for college applicants who take the SAT. Some experts attribute the changes to the ACT’s recent gains. Although 1.7 million students took the SAT last year, in 2012 the ACT was taken by more students for the first time and that trend continued in 2013. To read more about the SAT redesign, [click here](#). To see the eight major changes, [click here](#).

President Obama Releases FY 2015 Budget Proposal

On Tuesday, President Obama unveiled the fiscal year 2015 [budget](#) proposal. The \$3.9 trillion budget proposal, which would never balance, is assumed to be a non-starter in both chambers but provides insight into the Administration’s policy priorities. Using the standard ten-year budget calculation, the proposal would add \$8.3 trillion to the national debt and raise taxes by \$1.8 trillion over that time. The blueprint calls for a 2% increase (\$1.3 billion) in education spending which would bring the total request to \$69 billion in discretionary spending. As Secretary Duncan noted, the President’s decision to introduce the proposal at a public school in the District underscores his commitment to invest in education. To view an infographic, [click here](#).

Budget: Education Highlights

At the Department of Education, Secretary Arne Duncan [presented](#) the \$68 billion discretionary request for the upcoming year. The stated objectives of the education budget are to establish universal preschool access for all four year olds, support teachers and school leaders, improve the state of higher education, and ensure safe school environments. In keeping with the President's focus on income inequality, the proposal calls for the establishment of a new Race to the Top-Equity and Opportunity program (\$300 million) which seeks to incentivize districts to find ways to close achievement gaps among historically underserved communities. During the Q and A portion of the presentation, AACCS staff thanked the panel for previous clarifications on the RTT-Early Learning Challenge competitive grant program and asked that further applications clarify that private, faith-based providers need not be included by states.

Budget: Early Education

The education budget includes a request to include the President's major early education initiative, Preschool for All (\$75 billion) as a mandatory program. Preschool for All, a plan to offer free full-day preschool for four year olds from low- to middle-income households, remains a top priority for the Administration. Even the liberal leaning Center for American Progress (CAP) survey revealed that 74% of four year olds are already enrolled in an early learning program. Currently, the federal government finances 45 early learning and child care programs throughout the agencies, and spending on these programs tops \$20 billion annually.

Budget: K-12

Regarding national standards, the budget credited the Administration's role in the adoption of the Common Core Standards for English and mathematics. Furthermore, the document hailed the fact that "nearly all will field-test performance-based assessments tied to those standards this spring, a movement fueled by previous RTT (Race to the Top) grants." The Administration appropriated \$350 million to support two consortia's development of Common Core aligned end-of-year assessments that are to be taken in 2014-2015. To read an overview of the budget, [click here](#). To view the response from House Education Committee Chairman John Kline (R-MN), [click here](#).

Dramatic Agency Reversal Yields Homeschooling Victory

On Monday, the Supreme Court [declined](#) to review the case of *Romeike v. Holder* which upheld a lower court ruling that would start deportation proceedings for the German family. Under threat of imprisonment and removal of their children, Uwe and Hannelore Romeike petitioned the United States government for asylum. In 2008, the family was granted political asylum after facing persistent harassment from the German government for homeschooling their children. Several years after the family moved to America, the Department of Justice (DOJ) on behalf of ICE filed charges against the family and argued that homeschooling was not a fundamental right. In the DOJ brief, lawyers for the Administration stated that "teaching tolerance to children of all backgrounds helps to develop the ability to interact as a fully functioning citizen of Germany." Understandably outraged, over 100,000 Americans signed a petition supporting the family's right to stay in the country. After years of legal wrangling and an adverse lower court decision, the case finally reached the Supreme Court this week. Upon being denied *certiorari*, Home School Legal Defense Association President Michael Farris [expressed](#) his disbelief at the hubris of the Administration and the implicit denial of the fundamental purpose for the American founding as evidenced by the story of the Pilgrims. He warned, "This administration thinks it's a privilege to home school—not a right. . . . We'd better buckle down and be ready to fight them every step of the way." In a stunning development on the following day, the family received a call from a Department of Homeland Security official granting them "indefinite deferred status" which will allow them to stay in America. Mr. Farris [credited](#) God's intervention for this amazing reversal.

In Case You Missed It:

[Weekly Market Update](#) provided by Jeff Beach of the [AACCS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch](#)

[Core-ites Awaken](#)

[Of Consciences and Cake](#)