Heads Up on Current Education Issues
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Heads Up comes to you as a complimentary service from the Education Commission of the States (ECS) and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and is a monthly compilation of recommended research and reading on critical public education issues.

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Is this useful? Email: eworkman@ecs.org
- Achievement Gaps -

*Home-Town Values and High Accountability: A Texas Recipe for Districtwide Success in an Urban School District*

A recently-entered research study from the ECS database reports findings from a case study of urban school district effectiveness in raising achievement for all students and in reducing historic achievement gaps among student groups.

- At-Risk -

*Staying On Course: Three-Year Results of the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Evaluation*

This report from MDRC presents results from a rigorous evaluation of the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program, an intensive residential program that aims to "reclaim the lives of at-risk youth" who have dropped out. Findings indicate that program participants were more likely to obtain a GED or high school diploma, be employed at the time of survey and earn about 20 percent more than their control group counterparts.

- Bullying -

*Analysis of State Bullying Laws and Policies*

In this report, the U.S. Department of Education presents a comprehensive analysis of state bullying laws, as well as information on how existing laws and policies translate into practice within elementary and secondary school systems.

*Bullying in Schools: An Overview*

The U.S. Department of Justice released an overview of connections between bullying in schools, attendance and achievement. Among the key findings is that school engagement protects victims from truancy and low academic achievement.

- Charter Schools -

*Measuring Up to the Model: A Ranking of State Charter School Laws*

This annual report from NAPCS ranks and analyzes state charter school laws. The report compares the laws to NAPCS's model law, highlights key changes in state laws and provides profiles of each state law.

- Child Well-Being -

*2011 Child and Youth Well-Being Index*

A comprehensive measure of how children are faring in the United States based on a composite of 28 key indicators of well-being that are grouped into seven Quality-of-Life/Well-Being Domains.

- Civic Engagement -

*Civic Engagement through Digital Citizenship*

This edition of *The Progress of Education Reform* (ECS), includes a closer look at the characteristics of digital natives and provides a summary of research about digital natives’ civic engagement habits and the implications of this research for education policy aimed at promoting digital citizenship for today’s youth.

- College Completion -

*The Role of Minority Serving Institutions in National College Completion Goals*

Minority-serving institutions, which enroll almost 14% of the college-going population, must play a key role if the United States is to have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020, says an Institute for Higher Education Policy report. Over the next eight years, the percentage of people of color nationwide is projected to rise to 40%, from 31%.
Preparation for Change: A National Perspective on Common Core State Standards Implementation Planning
This study identifies 46 states and DC as having adopted the common core standards, but notes that only seven have fully developed plans to put the standards into practice. The report focuses on three key areas: providing curriculum or instructional materials, offering professional development to teachers, and adapting teacher evaluation to reflect instruction in the new standards.

Curriculum

Algebra: A Challenge at the Crossroads of Policy and Practice
A recently entered research study in the ECS database assesses selective and "universal algebra" policies, including who is getting access to algebra and at what point in their educational careers.

Data

Data for Action 2011: Empower with Data
The Data Quality Campaign's new national report explores the changing landscape of education policy and data, identifies four game-changing priorities, and offers details about the state of each state’s efforts to support effective data use.

English Language Learners

Assessing English Language Learners' Opportunity to Learn Mathematics: Issues and Limitations
A recently-entered research study from the ECS database explores performance differences between ELL and non-ELL students, paying special attention to the relationship between students' ELL status and their level of opportunity to learn.

Postsecondary – Distance Learning

Online Learning 101
This NCSL brief defines online learning, identifies opportunities and concerns for policymakers, and offers strategies for evaluating it. It also highlights new and creative models for online learning and discusses state and federal regulation of the industry.

Rural

Why Rural Matters 2011-12: The Condition of Rural Education in the 50 States
Why RuralMatters 2011-12 is the sixth in a series of biennial reports analyzing the contexts and conditions of rural education in each of the 50 states and calls attention to the need for policymakers to address rural education issues in their respective states.

School Leadership

The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning
The Wallace Foundation released a perspective outlining five key responsibilities of effective principals that result in improved outcomes for students, the culmination of a decade of work in the area of school leadership.
12 for 2012
This report is an ECS "read of the field," built on our scrutiny of new reports and research, and our analysis of emerging drivers of change. The 12 policy areas do not represent an exhaustive list of the critical issues for the coming year, nor is this report intended to dictate your education policy priorities for 2012. Rather, 12 for 2012 is intended to stimulate thinking around how best to craft the "2.0" of powerful policy across the states.

Teaching Quality

Learning Denied: The Case for Equitable Access to Effective Teaching in California’s Largest School District
The authors used student test scores to estimate the "value-added" of tens of thousands of teachers in Los Angeles Unified School District over a three-year period. Their findings indicate that effective teaching makes a large difference in student learning, but that low-income students and students of color are less likely to be taught by the most effective teachers.

The Long-Term Impacts of Teachers: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood
A new study from researchers at Harvard and Columbia Universities concluded that value-added measures can be used to identify effective teachers, and that students of teachers identified as effective were more successful than their peers in a variety of long-term outcomes including college attendance, salaries and teenage pregnancies.

2011 State Teacher Policy Yearbook
The report by the National Center on Teaching Quality documents unique state adopted policies that take student achievement seriously in evaluating the effectiveness of their teaching workforces.

What is YOUR State Doing?
What is your state doing to tackle current education issues? Have you set up interim studies or task forces? Have you located research that has assisted you in developing sound policies? Well, we want to hear about it! Send along any information you consider useful for your fellow legislative staffers, and we will see that it is included in the next issue of Heads Up. Please send information to Emily Workman at eworkman@ecs.org.

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