Heads Up on Current Education Issues

July 2012

_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.

**New from ECS!**

*Technology in Early Education* - The latest edition of *The Progress of Education Reform, Technology in Early Education: Building Platforms for Connections and Content that Strengthen Families and Promote Success in School*, outlines trends in digital media use by young children, examines effective teachers and libraries as partners, and provides guidelines for policymakers on building integrated technology platforms for early education.

**New from NCSL!**

*Higher Education Legislation in 2012* - Many states enacted significant higher education legislation in 2012. Legislators enacted laws concerning time to degree, performance-based funding, remedial education, transfer and articulation, college costs, and prior learning assessments. This report provides highlights of bills from 2012 legislative sessions.

*Performance Funding for Higher Education* - Typically, colleges receive state funding based on how many full-time equivalent students are enrolled at the beginning of the semester. That model provides incentives for colleges to enroll students—but not necessarily to help them graduate. Many states are reconsidering the enrollment-based funding model and instead are allocating money to colleges based on the number of students who complete courses and degrees. This webpage provides information on states that have had some recent activity with performance-based funding.
In this issue:

- **21st Century Skills: Education for Life and Work**: Developing Transferable Knowledge and Skills in the 21st Century
- **Curriculum – Science**: Effective Programs for Elementary Science: A Best-Evidence Synthesis
- **English Language Learners (ELLs)**: Children in Immigrant Families: Essential to America’s Future
- **Finance – Federal**: What Impact Did Education Stimulus Funds Have on States and School Districts?
- **High School – Dual Enrollment**: Broadening the Benefits of Dual Enrollment: Reaching Underachieving and Underrepresented Students with Career-Focused Programs
- **International Comparisons**: Achievement Growth: International and U.S. State Trends in Student Performance
- **Pre-School - Great Start Readiness Program Evaluation**
- **Postsecondary - Reverse Transfer**: A National View of Student Mobility from Four-Year to Two-Year Institutions; Certificates: Gateway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees
- **Postsecondary Affordability**: Is College Affordable? In Search of a Meaningful Definition
- **Postsecondary Data**: Postsecondary Institutions and Price of Attendance in 2011-12, Degrees and Other Awards Conferred: 2010-11, and 12-Month Enrollment: 2010-11
- **Postsecondary - Community Colleges**: Student Voices on the Higher Education Pathway
- **Postsecondary – For-Profit Institutions**: A New Classification Scheme for For-Profit Institutions
- **Pregnant Students - Title IX**: A Pregnancy Test for Schools: The Impact of Education Laws on Pregnant and Parenting Students
- **Teacher Compensation**: The Sheepskin Effect and Student Achievement De-emphasizing the Role of Master’s Degrees in Teacher Compensation
- **Teacher Evaluations**: Teacher Evaluation in Tennessee: A Report on Year 1 Implementation
- **Teacher Preparation**: Educating the Next Generation of Massachusetts Teachers: Building Effective Partnerships in Preparation and Support
- **Teacher Recruitment and Retention**: Building and Sustaining Talent: Creating Conditions in High-Poverty Schools That Support Effective Teaching and Learning
- **Unions/Collective Bargaining**: Trending Toward Reform: Teachers Speak on Unions and the Future of the Profession
- **Whole Child Well-Being**: 2012 KIDS COUNT Data Book
- 21st Century Skills -

**Education for Life and Work: Developing Transferable Knowledge and Skills in the 21st Century** - The National Research Council appointed a committee of experts in education, psychology, and economics to more clearly define “deeper learning” and “21st century skills,” consider these skills’ importance for positive outcomes in education, work, and other areas of life, address how to teach them, and examine related issues. The committee’s findings and recommendations are detailed in this report.
Source: National Research Council

- Curriculum – Science -

**Effective Programs for Elementary Science: A Best-Evidence Synthesis** - This article presents a systematic review of research on the achievement outcomes of multiple approaches to teaching science in elementary schools. The review concludes that methods focused on enhancing teachers’ instruction in science throughout the year, such as cooperative learning and science-reading integration, as well as approaches that give teachers technology tools to enhance instruction, have significant potential to improve science learning.
Source: Best Evidence Encyclopedia, May 2012

- English Language Learners (ELLs) -

**Children in Immigrant Families: Essential to America’s Future** – The authors present findings on children in immigrant families in six domains (family economic well-being, health, educational attainment, community engagement, and social relationships). They found that only 7% of children who are dual-language learners are reading proficiently by the time they finish 3rd grade, compared to 37% of students who speak English as their first language.
Source: Foundation for Child Development

- Finance – Federal -

**What Impact Did Education Stimulus Funds Have on States and School Districts?** - The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, or ARRA, provided approximately $100 billion in extra federal funding for education fiscal year 2009. This money, intended to help stabilize and support public education during the economic recession, was used to compensate for state budget shortfalls and prevent the loss of educator jobs and to fund or supplement programs like Race to the Top, Title I and IDEA. This summary report synthesizes findings from six previous CEP reports examining the effects of the funding, based on survey responses of state and local officials charged with implementing the ARRA and Education Jobs programs. Taking a retrospective look over three years of survey data, this report distills themes and draws conclusions about the overall effects of ARRA on K-12 education.
Source: Center on Education Policy

- High School – Dual Enrollment -

**Broadening the Benefits of Dual Enrollment: Reaching Underachieving and Underrepresented Students with Career-Focused Programs** - The authors of this study suggest that career-focused dual enrollment programs — in which high school students take college courses for credit — can benefit underachieving students and those underrepresented in higher education. The study found that California students who participated in dual enrollment were more likely than similar students in their districts to graduate from
high school, enroll in four-year colleges, and persist in college. They also accumulated more college credits and were less likely to take remedial classes.
Source: CCRC

- International Comparisons -

**Achievement Growth: International and U.S. State Trends in Student Performance** - The authors found that students in Latvia, Chile, and Brazil are making gains in academics three times faster than American students, while those in several other countries are improving at twice the rate. Although the U.S. is not one of the nine countries that lost academic ground between 1995 and 2009, more countries were improving at a significantly faster rate.
Source: Harvard University

- Pre-School -

**Great Start Readiness Program Evaluation** - State funding for public prekindergarten began in Michigan in the fall of 1985 and the program now serves over 30,000 students. An evaluation of the program’s success has been completed by researchers who followed 500 children for 14 years. They found that students who attended Michigan's public pre-K program, Great Start Readiness, received higher marks from K-12 teachers, were more likely to pass the 4th-grade MEAP, and were less likely to be held back compared to their peers who did not attend pre-K (36.5% versus 49.2% between 2nd and 12th grade).
Source: HighScope Educational Research Foundation

- Postsecondary -

**Reverse Transfer: A National View of Student Mobility from Four-Year to Two-Year Institutions** - The authors in this report examine enrollment pathways of reverse transfer students, those who moved from four-year to two-year institutions outside of summer months. They argue that understanding this type of student mobility can help campus policymakers at both two-year and four-year institutions craft policies that will help institutions reach their enrollment goals and better assist students in making decisions about their educational pathways.
Source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center

**Certificates: Gateway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees** - Certificates have swelled to become the second most common postsecondary award in the U.S.: Over 1 million are awarded each year. In the context of concerns about rising college costs and student loan debt, certificates, which are cheaper and take less time to complete than college degrees, have become of increasing interest to researchers, institutions, and other stakeholders in higher education. This report analyzes earnings by field of study, sex, race/ethnicity, and program length. One of the most important factors that affect earnings is whether certificate holders work in the same occupational field they studied in.
Source: Center on Education and the Workforce

- Postsecondary Affordability -

**Is College Affordable? In Search of a Meaningful Definition** - The goal of this brief is to make progress in understanding what it really means for college to be “affordable” or “unaffordable.” This brief provides perspectives on what determines whether, when, and for whom college is affordable. The authors find
that affordability is unavoidably subjective but that the costs and risks associated with postsecondary education are greatest for students whose families are unable to provide significant financial assistance.

- Postsecondary Data -

**Postsecondary Institutions and Price of Attendance in 2011-12, Degrees and Other Awards Conferred: 2010-11, and 12-Month Enrollment: 2010-11** - The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) collects institution-level data from postsecondary institutions in the United States and other U.S. jurisdictions. This First Look presents findings from the preliminary data of the IPEDS fall 2011 data collection, which included three survey components: Institutional Characteristics; Completions; and 12-Month Enrollment. Findings include: average tuition and required fees for full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates at 4-year institutions generally increased from 2009-10 to 2011-12 and of the roughly 3.6 million degrees institutions reported conferring, about 2.9 million were awarded by 4-year institutions and approximately 650,000 were awarded by 2-year institutions.

Source: NCES

- Postsecondary – Community Colleges -

**Student Voices on the Higher Education Pathway** - To get at the heart of the college-completion challenge, researchers spoke directly with students – those currently enrolled in a community college, some who had graduated, and others who had dropped out. The resulting report identified five themes related to factors influencing their college decision, attitudes toward completion, experience with remedial classes, and institutional supports and barriers.

Source: Completion by Design

- Postsecondary – For-Profit Institutions -

**A New Classification Scheme for For-Profit Institutions** - For-profit institutions are more visible today among policymakers, researchers, and investors, due in large part to the sharp rise in the number of students attending them over the last decade. To truly understand the sector and differentiate among institutions, the authors create a classification scheme that focuses on the markets that for-profits operate in, institutional specialization, and the ways in which students engage for-profits. The classification framework allows for the creation of peer groups of institutions and students to foster comparative analyses and represents a new way of thinking about for-profit institutions.

Source: Institute of Higher Education Policy

- Pregnant Students – Title IX -

**A Pregnancy Test for Schools: The Impact of Education Laws on Pregnant and Parenting Students** – The authors of this report outline the implications of education laws, specifically Title IX, on pregnant and parenting students. They examine federal, state, and local policies, and rank states in terms of how well state education laws and policies address the needs of these students, and conclude with recommendations for both policymakers and schools.

Source: National Women's Law Center
- Teacher Compensation -

**The Sheepskin Effect and Student Achievement De-emphasizing the Role of Master’s Degrees in Teacher Compensation** - Despite little research supporting the practice, paying teachers for earning advanced degrees cost states an estimated $14 billion in 2008-09. The authors of this report contend that the funding could be better spent on offering more to teachers in shortage fields; higher salaries to retain the best teachers; or incentives to teachers who take difficult teaching assignments.
Source: Center for American Progress

- Teacher Evaluations -

**Teacher Evaluation in Tennessee: A Report on Year 1 Implementation** - This report presents feedback from educators and stakeholders given to the TN Department of Education on the state's new teacher evaluation system, rolled out in the 2011-2012 school year. Responses are mixed and will be used by the department for continuous improvement.
Source: Tennessee Department of Education, July 2012

- Teacher Preparation -

**Educating the Next Generation of Massachusetts Teachers: Building Effective Partnerships in Preparation and Support** – In this report, the authors present a new three-year model for post-baccalaureate teacher preparation and development aimed at improving the quality of the educator workforce statewide. The model proposed focuses on partnerships at the district level to achieve joint accountability for the training of a majority of teachers working in the Commonwealth. Core elements of the model include: recruitment and selection; pre-service orientation; three years in-district training; collaborative supervision and mentoring; co-developed and co-taught program curriculum; peer support, feedback, and reflection; and program assessment and accountability.
Source: Rennie Center

- Teacher Recruitment and Retention -

**Building and Sustaining Talent: Creating Conditions in High-Poverty Schools That Support Effective Teaching and Learning** - The authors examine teacher recruitment and retention in hard to staff schools and offer examples, such as staff cohesion and strong principal leadership, of how some schools and districts are making high-poverty, low-performing schools satisfying, attractive places to work.
Source: The Education Trust

- Unions/Collective Bargaining -

**Trending Toward Reform: Teachers Speak on Unions and the Future of the Profession** – This report examines changes in K-12 public school teacher opinions about a variety of teacher-centered reforms, including new approaches to evaluation, pay, and tenure, and the role of unions in pushing for or against these reforms from 2007 to 2011. The findings show strong continued support among teachers for unions, however, the union is by no means in the clear as teachers’ express anger and frustration towards some bread and butter union policies.
Source: Education Sector
2012 KIDS COUNT Data Book - This year’s Data Book introduces a new KIDS COUNT index, which provides a detailed picture of how children are faring in the United States. In addition to ranking states on overall child well-being, the Data Book provides state rankings for four domains: Economic Well-Being, Education, Health, and Family and Community. Comparing the data from pre- and post-recession time frames reveals both positive and negative developments in child wellbeing nationally. Broadly speaking, children experienced gains in the Education and Health domains but setbacks in the Economic Well-Being and Family and Community domains.
Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation

What is YOUR State Doing?
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.

Contacts: Emily Workman
Researcher/LESN Coordinator
Education Commission of the States
Ph. (303) 299-3631
eworkman@ecs.org

Sara V. Shelton
Policy Specialist, Education Program
National Conference of State Legislatures
Ph. (303) 856-1647
sara.shelton@ncsl.org