Heads Up on Current Education Issues

June 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!**

**Service-Learning After Learn and Serve America: How Five States Are Moving Forward** - This set of case studies aims to highlight policy and practice in several states where service-learning experts are designing and implementing agendas to maintain and advance statewide service-learning initiatives with no federal aid and no new state aid.

**Surfacing the Top Ten Trends from the 2012 Legislative Session** - This policy scan of the top legislative trends in postsecondary education of 2012 suggests that legislatures are focusing on meeting workforce needs through the creation of new programs of study and the streamlining of career pathways. Overall, seven of the 10 trends had a substantial workforce or economic development element.

**Understanding State School Funding: The First Step Towards Quality Reforms** - This issue of The Progress of Education Reform sets out to ease some of the confusion around state funding formulas by helping readers better understand these complex systems, with the hope that this knowledge will be used to help support education reform in the states.

**New from NCSL!**

**Ensuring Latino Success in College and the Workforce** - One significant way to revitalize state economies is to increase the number of Latinos, our fastest growing population, attending and graduating from college. This report lays out some issues to consider, as policymakers work on how to improve the educational success of Latinos and strengthen the workforce.

**Charter Schools: Student Achievement** - NCSL published a series of issue briefs exploring charter schools in the states with the support of the Walton Family Foundation. The briefs address six specific charter school issues that legislators play a role in shaping: Authorizers, Caps, Finance, Facilities, Student Achievement and Teachers.

**Saving for College: 529 Plans** - Although most states offer a 529 prepaid tuition or college savings plan, these may differ in terms of investment strategy, fees, and state tax benefits. This new brief highlights some of the differences and offers strategies for legislators to improve and strengthen their state 529 plans.
In this issue:

- **Accountability** - A Statistical Approach to Identifying Schools Demonstrating Substantial Improvement in Student Learning
- **At-Risk Students** - Title IX: A Pregnancy Test for Schools: The Impact of Education Laws on Pregnant and Parenting Students
- **Blended Learning** - Classifying K-12 Blended Learning
- **Bullying** - Extent of Legal Protections for Vulnerable Groups Needs to Be More Fully Assessed
- **Charter Schools** - Charter Schools in SREB States: Critical Questions and Next Steps for States; Charter Schools: Additional Federal Attention Needed to Help Protect Access for Students with Disabilities
- **Civic Engagement** - Fault Lines in Our Democracy Civic Knowledge, Voting Behavior, and Civic Engagement in the United States
- **Common Core State Standards** - Putting a Price Tag on the Common Core: How Much Will Smart Implementation Cost?; Why Teach Spelling?
- **Community Colleges** - What Can a Multifaceted Program Do for Community College Students?
- **Early Childhood Education (P-3)** - Increasing the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Existing Public Investments in Early Childhood Education; Analysis of Race to the Top: Early Learning Challenge Application Section on “Sustaining Effects into the Early Elementary Grades
- **English Language Learners/P-3** - Preschool and School Readiness Experiences of Children with Non-English-Speaking Parents
- **High School** – Advanced Placement - The 8th Annual AP Report to the Nation
- **Principal Leadership** - The Making of a Principal: Five Lessons in Leadership Training
- **Teacher Preparation** - What Teacher Preparation Programs Teach About K-12 Assessment: A Review
- Accountability -

A Statistical Approach to Identifying Schools Demonstrating Substantial Improvement in Student Learning - A recently-entered research study in the ECS database examines several statistical models that can be used with school-level data to identify schools that previously were performing poorly but have made substantial and rapid improvements.

- At-Risk Students -

Title IX: A Pregnancy Test for Schools: The Impact of Education Laws on Pregnant and Parenting Students - This report outlines the ways that federal, state, and local laws, policies, and programs can change the landscape for pregnant and parenting students and ranks how well the state laws and policies address the needs of these students. The report describes the particular challenges faced by pregnant and parenting students, highlights the requirements of federal laws, reviews relevant state laws and policies, and concludes with recommendations for both policymakers and for schools.
Source: National Women's Law Center, June 2012

- Blended Learning -

Classifying K-12 Blended Learning - This White Paper outlines four K-12 blended learning models and describes the various implementation methods for each. This updated paper refines previous categories and definitions to create a shared language for the K-12 blended-learning sector.
Source: Innosight Institute, May 2012

- Bullying -

School Bullying: Extent of Legal Protections for Vulnerable Groups Needs to Be More Fully Assessed - This report about bullying recommends additional action by the U.S. Department of Education and the attorney general, and calls for more study to determine whether existing laws go far enough in protecting all students from bullying at school. Analyzing a number of surveys about bullying, the authors found that there are questions about the extent to which bullying affects certain groups of youths relative to others.
Source: Government Accountability Office (GAO)

- Charter Schools -

Charter Schools in SREB States: Critical Questions and Next Steps for States - This report examines policy questions surrounding the effectiveness of charter schools, their impact on traditional public schools, appropriate funding policies, and performance accountability. The authors provide recommendations to policymakers for maximizing the potential of charter schools.
Source: SREB, 2012

Charter Schools: Additional Federal Attention Needed to Help Protect Access for Students with Disabilities – The authors of this report find that charter schools across the country enroll a smaller percentage of students with disabilities than traditional public schools, though the factors behind those disparities remain unclear. Overall, the percentage of students with disabilities in charters was 8.2% compared to 11.2% in traditional public schools in 2009-10, but the difference varied by state.
Source: Government Accountability Office (GAO)
Fault Lines in Our Democracy Civic Knowledge, Voting Behavior, and Civic Engagement in the United States - This report examines "fault lines" in U.S. democracy including a lack of civics knowledge among students, and the fact that the likelihood of voting and volunteering is strongly related to one's age, education, literacy and numeracy skills, and income level. The authors offer ideas about how to create an educated and skilled citizenry to keep our democracy vital and strong.
Source: Educational Testing Service (ETS)

Putting a Price Tag on the Common Core: How Much Will Smart Implementation Cost? – The authors estimate the implementation cost for each of the forty-five states (and the District of Columbia) that have adopted the Common Core State Standards and show that costs naturally depend on how states approach implementation. The authors estimate costs under three models: business as usual, bare bones, and balanced implementation.
Source: Thomas B. Fordham Institute

Why Teach Spelling? - This compilation of reports examines the importance of spelling in students' reading abilities, describes models of spelling development, outlines common approaches to spelling instruction, and links these approaches to grade-level expectations in the Common Core.
Source: Center on Instruction

What Can a Multifaceted Program Do for Community College Students? - This report examines the City University of New York's ASAP program, which requires full-time attendance and offers comprehensive supports to community college students for three full years. Early results from a random assignment study show that ASAP increases credits earned, full-time enrollment, and completion of developmental (or remedial) coursework.
Source: MDRC

Increasing the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Existing Public Investments in Early Childhood Education - The authors of this report describe how conflicting expectations, misaligned system requirements, and programmatic firewalls on the federal level create formidable barriers to the operation of a well-coordinated system of high-quality early childhood education for children from birth to 5 years old. They set forth 10 federal reforms that they believe will significantly advance the evolution of our federally supported early childhood education system, improve child outcomes, and ensure system accountability, as well as operational consistency and greater efficiency.
Source: Center for American Progress, June 2012

Analysis of Race to the Top: Early Learning Challenge Application Section on “Sustaining Effects into the Early Elementary Grades - This paper explores how states that won the Race To The Top Early Learning Challenge intend to sustain student gains in early childhood education into the early elementary grades. The authors offer strategies to support states' efforts to sustain children's learning and development by aligning early childhood practices and policies with those in early elementary grades.
Preschool and School Readiness: Experiences of Children with Non-English-Speaking Parents – The authors examined children who hear little or no English in their home environments, a group that is generally not served in center-based early childhood education. Researchers found that when these children attended public preschool, their early reading skills significantly improved.

Source: Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC)

The 8th Annual AP Report to the Nation - This report uses a combination of state, national and Advanced Placement (AP) program data to provide each U.S. state with the context it can use to celebrate its successes, understand its unique challenges, and set meaningful, data-driven goals to prepare more students for success in college. The data include: (1) subject-specific results; (2) state-specific reports; (3) AP exams taken in U.S. public schools by the graduating class of 2011; (4) changes in equity and excellence from 2001 to 2011; and (5) raw numbers behind percentages in tables and additional AP program data.

Source: College Board

What Is Academic Momentum? And Does It Matter? - A recently-entered research study from the ECS database finds that students who delay college entry or enroll part-time are substantially less likely to earn a college degree.

Leaders and Laggards: A State-by-State Report Card on Public Postsecondary Education – The authors argue that the nation’s colleges and universities must do a better job of closing the growing divide between the education and skills of the American workforce and the needs of employers. Projections of labor market demand show that two-thirds of all jobs will require some postsecondary education by 2018; however, given today’s disappointing levels of higher education productivity, labor economists estimate that the United States will fall 7 million degrees short.

Source: Institute for a Competitive Workforce

Aid and Innovation: How Federal Aid Policy Impacts Student Success and How States Can Respond - This report describes how policy leaders and financial aid experts from a number of states are tackling a vexing problem: how financial aid rules and regulations stymie some of the most promising institutional and statewide innovations for serving low-income students who are underprepared for postsecondary education. These leaders are implementing innovative solutions that accelerate student progress toward postsecondary credentials. In doing so, they are encountering challenges posed by federal financial aid policies at multiple points along the pipeline to and through college, and they are actively seeking and experimenting with strategies to overcome those challenges.

Source: Jobs for the Future
**- Principal Leadership -**

*The Making of a Principal: Five Lessons in Leadership Training* – This report highlights the need for effective principal leadership in schools. The authors lay out five lessons, including in-service training and high-quality mentoring; that they believe could help propel many districts toward the goal of having strong principal leadership in every school.

Source: The Wallace Foundation

**- Teacher Preparation -**

*What Teacher Preparation Programs Teach About K-12 Assessment: A Review* - The authors examine what teacher preparation programs teach about K-12 assessment. They sampled 180 undergraduate and graduate programs to assess the preparation provided to teacher candidates on using assessment data to improve classroom instruction.

Source: National Center on Teaching Quality (NCTQ)

---

**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