Heads Up on Education Issues

April 2010

*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). Sometimes you'll find that we produced a document, but we've also reviewed many other recent reports for you and selected these as relevant and reflective of information you can trust.

If there's something you'd like to recommend for the next issue, please let us know.

**Assessment**

Brand new [Progress of Education Reform](#) looks at the issue of high school end-of-course exams.

**Career/Technical Education**

Too often the terms “career-ready” and “college ready” are used interchangeably and discussions around career readiness are limited to traditional academic skills. The reality is that it takes much more to be truly considered ready for a career. [What is “Career Ready”?](#)

**Class Size**

This [ECS StateNote](#) examines the characteristics and popularity of two similar approaches that states have chosen to keep classes small: Placing caps on the number of students that may be in one classroom; and enacting initiatives to reduce class size.

**Completion**

SREB has released a new report, [Promoting a Culture of Student Success](#), which suggests colleges improve student graduation by focusing more attention on student success—starting with first-year programs to help get freshmen off to a good start and doing more to meet the individual and group needs of students. The most successful institutions focus intently on continuous improvement.

**Community Colleges**

Community colleges suddenly have the nation's attention. Recession-impacted students are flooding admissions offices, while policymakers and business leaders are looking to community colleges to help America's workers gain new skills and get back to work. Community colleges are helping underprepared students succeed. [Pathway to the Baccalaureate](#) is from the New America Foundation.

**Decentralization**

How is it playing out? [This paper](#), prepared for the Ford Foundation Project on Choice District Governance looks at decentralization both at a traditional school district and at a choice district.

**Early Learning**

Check out the expansion of prekindergarten enrollment from the newly released [Digest of Education Statistics](#).

The current [NCSL Issues and Research](#) includes a very interesting case study documenting Pennsylvania’s progress on building and using early childhood data systems.
Employability
According to the statistics in this Bureau of Labor Statistics report, high school graduates who never enrolled in college were employed 72% of the weeks from ages 18-22. Dropouts were employed 54%.

Finance
If the federal education jobs fund passes, what would it mean for the states? This ECS Alert focuses on estimating the number of jobs potentially created or saved.

International
Public interest has put significant focus on how the United States education system compares with those around the world. This ECS StateNote uses data collected and published by the OECD and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to show how America's school funding system compares with other developed countries' systems.

Remedial Education

STATE REPORTING ON DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION – Getting Past Go (GPG) – a national project led by the Education Commission of the States – analyzed more than 50 state and higher education system reports on college remedial/developmental education. Overall, GPG found that data contained in the reports fell into three main categories related to developmental education: student participation, student success and cost. This GPG analysis suggests that states should consider creating more common standards for reporting developmental education data. http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/85/27/8527.pdf

School Choice
The National Center for Education Statistics has released the third in a series of reports that analyze school choice. The report provides information on trends in the distribution of enrollment in public schools and private schools, parental satisfaction and demographic characteristics of students whose parents report there are public school choice options available in their district. The report also examines demographic characteristics of students in home, public, charter and private schools.

School Safety
What is the impact of one violence prevention program in a middle school? This IES report indicates not so much, at least after one year.

State Budgets
NCSL has released a report on the state’s weathering the economic storm. For 2011, nearly every state is projecting that revenues will exceed current-year levels, although the increases in many states will be "razor thin". Even as revenues begin a modest uptick, mounting spending pressures, along with the tapering-off of federal economic-stimulus aid, mean that most states are likely to be grappling with budget shortfalls for at least the next two or three years.

In this American Association of School Administrators survey of 453 administrators in 45 states, 60% were considering personnel layoffs and 34% were considering furloughs.

STEM
A recent report from the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities summarizes the basic steps involved in developing supply and demand estimates for secondary science and mathematics teachers. http://state-needs.teacher-imperative.com/includes/pdfs/Summary%20of%20Steps.pdf

Student Achievement
Students in urban districts have improved markedly in math and reading proficiency as measured both on state exams and the National Assessment of Educational Progress, according to an
annual report by the Council of the Great City Schools, “Beating the Odds”. This link will take you to city-by-city data.

**Student Migration**
Curious how many students leave your state to attend college elsewhere? Here are three informative tables from NCES.
http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_222.asp?referrer=list
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**Teacher Effectiveness**
Assuring effective teachers and administrators in every high-poverty school is a lofty goal. But how do you accomplish that? "An Effective Teacher in Every Classroom" is a discussion between Katy Haycock from Education Trust and Stan Hanushek from Stanford University. It provides strategies most likely to work in meeting that goal as well as some ideas on measuring teacher quality.

**Teachers – Performance Pay**
A brief from the Wisconsin Legislative Library provides readers with a collection of resources on teacher performance pay.

**Transfer**
This transfer fact sheet from the National Association of College Admissions Counseling indicates that the college GPA is the most important for transfer—at least in public colleges. However, private colleges are more likely to pay attention such factors as test scores, high school quality, personal essays and interviews.

Click here for state policies that have been added so far in 2010 to the ECS state policy database.

If you have questions or comments about “Heads Up on Education Issues” please contact Melodye Bush at ECS.

**CALL FOR NOMINATIONS**

**2010 LESN RECOGNITION AWARD** - The Legislative Education Staff Network (LESN) is accepting nominations for the 2010 LESN Recognition Award, given each year to an education legislative staffer who has provided outstanding service to the legislative process through the years and who has been active in the LESN network. This year's award recipient will be recognized at the 2010 ECS National Forum in Portland, Oregon, and the NCSL Summit. Any legislative staff member who works on education policy and has participated in the LESN is eligible to receive this award. Any person may make a nomination by Friday, May 21. Submit nomination to Sara Shelton via e-mail or at 303.856.1647.

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