**Heads Up on Education Issues**

**April 2011**

*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 suggest for the next issue, please let us know. State reports often cover topics which would be of great interest to other states. Feel free to send information about such reports for inclusion in an upcoming issue.

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**First of all, an important LESN network message:**

We all know one – an exemplary legislative staff. The Legislative Education Staff Network is now accepting nominations for the 2011 Recognition Award. Nominations are due Friday, May 20. Click the links for award guidelines and a nomination form. Click here to view winners over the years.

Audrey Carr, the 2007 LESN Recognition Award Winner from Kentucky is retiring May 31, 2011. Ken Warlick is one of Audrey’s coworkers and a member of this year’s LESN Steering Committee. "Audrey began her Legislative Research Commission career on September 1, 1996 as an analyst with the Interim Joint Committee on Education; she became Chief Staff Administrator of that committee on September 1, 2002. Prior to going to the LRC, Audrey spent years working for the Kentucky Department of Education." We will definitely miss Audrey, and wish Ken well as he looks at filling the gap left by her retirement.

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**Accountability**

In 2005, the U.S. Department of Education initiated a Growth Model Pilot Project allowing 10 states to experiment with adjustments to NCLB accountability systems. Click here for the final report of this project.

**At Risk**

A student unable to read at grade level by third grade is four times less likely to graduate by age 19 than his peers. Add poverty to the mix and the student is 13 times less likely to graduate on time, according to a report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

**Assessment**

The 2009 NAEP High School Transcript Study shows the importance of a more rigorous curriculum.

**Blended Learning**

Online and blended learning have grown dramatically in the last decade, but ensuring that only quality charter cyber or online programs get approved can be tricky.
Charter Schools

Check out this research study summary on whether attending charter high schools increases the likelihood that a student will complete high school and attend college.

Collaborative Use of Facilities

Check out this NCSL LegisBrief on opening school fields, playgrounds and gymnasiums to the public when not being used by students. It can be a low-cost way to encourage physical activity and use state appropriations efficiently.

Completion

By 2020, 66% of UTAH’S workforce will require a post-secondary degree/training. This Web site details the state’s plan to improve the educational attainment of its citizens.

This brief calls attention to a number of policy choices that the Washington community and technical college system faced as it designed and began implementation of student achievement initiatives across its 34 colleges.

Economic Development – Human Capital

Read the summary of a study examining whether investing in improving the cognitive skills of the population has the potential for substantial improvements in long-term economic well-being.

Finance

Check out how your peers have honed their education funding formulas this year. http://www.ecs.org/ecs/ecscat.nsf/Web2011All?OpenView&Start=1&Count=1000&Expand=46#46

Governance

A newly updated ECS StateNote summarizes recent state action giving governors greater control over education.

Improving Low-Performing Schools

A new issue brief from the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices offers lessons from its State Strategies to Improve Chronically Low-Performing Schools project.

Postsecondary Completion

A new ECS analysis shows how commissions and task forces are charged to address improving college completion and workforce readiness.

Reading/Literacy

In this policy brief, American Institutes for Research looks at ways schools moving from part- to full-day kindergarten can best use the additional instruction time to improve early reading skills.

This Alliance for Excellent Education Issue Brief calls for federal support to ensure state literacy plans are aligned to the English language arts common core standards.

State Comparisons

New from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the 2011 Statistical Abstract.
Want to know the number of charter schools by state? The percent of rural students by state? See this report from NCES.

**Teacher Certification**

NCSL has just released a legislator’s guide to National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification.

**Teacher Compensation**

From the What Works Clearinghouse comes a quick review of a study measuring the effects of offering financial incentives to teachers.

**Teacher Employment**

Two CALDER studies resulted in a brief one-pager on teacher layoff.

**Teacher Evaluation/Effectiveness**

The Aspen Institute poses five questions which should be addressed in the development of teacher evaluation systems.

**Teacher Preparation**

This Preschool Policy Brief argues that too much attention has been given to debating the baseline qualifications required of preschool teachers. The authors contend it is equally important to take into account the nature of the education teachers receive en route to a degree.

The New America Foundation adds its observations to the issue of teacher preparation in the early grades.

**Webinar Invitation**

Join Bruce Vandal of Education Commission of the States and Patrick Kelly from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems on May 12, 2011 at 1:00 PM EST for a webinar on how state legislators can spur economic growth by increasing college completion rates for their residents. The session will explore:

- How states can measure a return on their investment in higher education
- The unique demographic and economic realities that states are encountering
- Potential policy solutions for state legislators.

Register for the Webinar here.

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

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Sara Shelton, NCSL LESN Staff Coordinator, will be on maternity leave until the first of August. If you have any questions regarding LESN, please don’t hesitate to contact Melodye Bush at 303-299-3631 or mbush@ecs.org.