Heads Up on Current Education Issues
January 2013

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!

Resources for State Leaders Seeking to Improve School Safety - The purpose of this ECS Alert is to provide our constituents with quick access to resources and information on potential policies directly related to school safety. The following report contains descriptions and links, sorted by topic, from ECS and other organizations.

Kindergarten Database – This database provides state policy information on the 50 states and DC on a range of topics related to kindergarten, including entrance age requirements, availability of entry assessments, and minimum days/hours required.

Over 30 Governors have delivered their State of the State Addresses. Check out their education-related proposals!

New from NCSL!

A Legislative Look at Expanded Learning Opportunities: How State Policies Support Learning Outside the Traditional School Day - This brief examines how state policy can effectively support and advance ELOs – structured learning environments that occur outside of the traditional school day through before- and after-school, summer, and extended-day, -week, -year programs – from low cost options to larger grant programs.

Time and Learning: Time as a Resource to Support Student Success - This brief reviews examples of recent state policies that examine time and learning and two extended school day pilot programs.

Rethinking “Seat Time:” State Approaches to Earning Credit in Out-of-School Time
Instead of awarding credit for required classroom time or “seat-time,” many states are considering competency-based systems, also known as proficiency based credits. This brief examines examples of competency-based credit policies in the states.
In this issue:

- **Assessments – Common Core:**
  - Strength in Numbers: State Spending on K-12 Assessment Systems
  - On the Road to Assessing Deeper Learning: The Status of Smarter Balanced and PARCC Assessment Consortia

- **Charter Schools:** Charter School Performance in Michigan

- **Child Well Being:** Child Well Being Index

- **College Remediation:** First-Year Undergraduate Remedial Coursertaking: 1999-2000, 2003-04, and 2007-08

- **Digital Learning:** Funding the Shift to Digital Learning: Three Strategies for Funding Sustainable High-Access Environments

- **High School:** Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates

- **High School Feedback:** Providing High School Feedback: Bridging the divide between K–12 and postsecondary education

- **International Comparisons:** What do international tests really show about U.S. student performance?

- **P–3 – Head Start:** Third Grade Follow-up to the Head Start Impact Study: Final Report

- **School Leadership:**
  - The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning
  - Using Student Test Scores to Measure Principal Performance
  - Is School Value-Added Indicative of Principal Quality?

- **Teacher Evaluations:** Ensuring Fair and Reliable Measures of Effective Teaching: Culminating Findings from the MET Project’s Three-Year Study

- **Teacher Preparation:** 2012 State Teacher Policy Yearbook: Improving Teacher Preparation National Summary
Strength in Numbers: State Spending on K-12 Assessment Systems - This report examines data from 45 states to identify the costs of assessment to states, and identify the highest and lowest spending states. The author urges states to seek efficiencies by collaborating on assessments, sharing fixed costs over a larger number of students, and using that market power to get test-makers to divulge more about pricing.
Source: Brookings Institution

On the Road to Assessing Deeper Learning: The Status of Smarter Balanced and PARCC Assessment Consortia - This study finds that the tests now being designed for the Common Core standards are likely to gauge deeper levels of learning and have a major impact on instruction. The report concludes that the assessments hold promise for improving teacher practice and student learning. But the authors caution that the test-making projects face key financial, technical, and political challenges that could affect their success.
Source: CRESST/University of California, Los Angeles

Charter School Performance in Michigan – The authors of this study find that charter school students in Michigan gained an additional two months of learning over the course of a single academic year in reading and math than their traditional school counterparts. The Center has analyzed charter school performance in many states, including Indiana and New Jersey, and found similar results.
Source: Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes

Child Well Being Index - The 2012 Annual Release of the CWI reports that American families’ economic decline preceded the recession, jeopardizing both middle class and low income children. American families endured a decade of economic decline from 2001-2011 that left a larger share of the nation’s children in poverty than was the case in 1975. The report also finds a large increase in poverty, together with declines in secure parental employment and median family income that are not simply due to the current recession, but instead can be traced back to 2001.
Source: The Foundation for Child Development

First-Year Undergraduate Remedial Coursetaking: 1999-2000, 2003-04, and 2007-08 – This report sheds light on incoming college students who are taking remedial classes and how the landscape has changed in the past decade. The percentage of freshman who had to take remedial classes dropped from 1999-
2000 to 2007-2008 from 26.3% to 20.4%. The report found lower percentages of white students taking remedial classes compared to black and Hispanic students.
Source: National Center for Education Statistics

- Digital Learning -

**Funding the Shift to Digital Learning: Three Strategies for Funding Sustainable High-Access Environments**
- This report outlines three strategies for funding sustainable, high-access environments. The authors present case studies of each model, and provide important considerations for implementing and sustaining high-access environments.
Source: Digital Learning Now!

- High School -

**Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates** - In its eighth edition of Knocking at the College Door, two trends are identified: a slight decline in the number of high school students after two decades of growth, and that future college students will be increasingly diverse. State-by-state analyses are provided.
Source: WICHE

- High School Feedback -

**Providing High School Feedback: Bridging the divide between K–12 and postsecondary education** - Providing high school feedback is crucial to bridging the gap between high school and college – what works at the school, what doesn't, how to improve. According to this report, 47 states now produce high school feedback reports by high school or district, 38 states make these reports available to the public, 29 states report by high school and 24 use recent-since 2010-data. For a state-by-state view of these reports, go [here](#).
Source: Data Quality Campaign

- International Comparisons -

**What do international tests really show about U.S. student performance?** – This study finds that U.S. student achievement looks more favorable on the global stage when comparisons take into account the especially large share of American adolescents who come from disadvantaged social backgrounds. The gap, for instance, between U.S. students and those from top-scoring nations on one global assessment would be cut in half in reading and by at least one-third in math.
Source: Economic Policy Institute
- P-3 – Head Start -

**Third Grade Follow-up to the Head Start Impact Study: Final Report** – This report finds that while Head Start participation benefited children's learning and development during their time in the preschool program, those advantages had mostly vanished by the end of 3rd grade. The new findings are consistent with an earlier phase of the study which showed that many of the positive impacts of Head Start participation had faded by the end of 1st grade.

Source: U.S Department of Health and Human Services

- School Leadership -

**The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning** - This expanded version of *The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning*, offers readers an opportunity to learn more about the key practices of effective school leaders – and why teachers should care about leadership. New features include a thought-provoking interview with education scholar Linda Darling-Hammond and one teacher's sharp observations of how leadership has made a real difference in schools where she has worked.

Source: The Wallace Foundation

**Using Student Test Scores to Measure Principal Performance** - This article identifies multiple conceptual approaches for capturing the contributions of principals to student test score growth, develops empirical models to reflect these approaches, examines the properties of these models, and compares the results of the models empirically using data from a large urban school district. The paper then assesses the degree to which the estimates from each model are consistent with measures of principal performance that come from sources other than student test scores, such as school district evaluations.

Source: Center for Education Policy Analysis, Stanford University

**Is School Value-Added Indicative of Principal Quality?** - The authors examine the extent to which school value-added is a valid indicator of elements of principals’ effectiveness that persist over time and impact multiple grades—elements that manifest principals’ general leadership skills. Using longitudinal data on the math and reading outcomes of 4th through 8th grade students in Pennsylvania, the findings indicate that school value-added provides little useful information for comparing the general leadership skills of different principals when those comparisons include some principals who are in their first three years at their current positions.

Source: Mathematica

- Teacher Evaluations -

**Ensuring Fair and Reliable Measures of Effective Teaching : Culminating Findings from the MET Project’s Three-Year Study** - After a three-year study in seven disparate districts, the authors conclude that teacher effectiveness can be reliably weighed. They find that allowing students' state test scores to account for 33% to 50% of an evaluation demonstrates the least volatility from year to year. Adding
student surveys and teacher observations makes ratings more consistent. They recommend two different observers.
Source: MET (Measures of Effective Teaching)

2012 State Teacher Policy Yearbook: Improving Teacher Preparation National Summary - While states are in the throes of crafting teacher evaluations, this is a look at how those states can better produce effective teachers in the first place. It provides state policymakers with a framework for teacher preparation that includes making sure new teachers can teach to the Common Core State Standards, that they have good content knowledge of the subjects they will teach, and that they student teach with a mentor who has proven to be effective.
Source: National Council on Teacher Quality

What is YOUR State Doing?
Send along any information or state analyses you consider useful for your fellow legislative staffers, and we will see that it is included in the next issue of Heads Up.
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