Heads Up on Education Issues  

June 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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Can I Get a Drum Roll Please?
Frances Raminez Maesta has won the 2011 LESN Recognition Award. Frances is the Executive Director of New Mexico’s Legislative Education Study Committee. Not only has Frances been a driving force in New Mexico but a champion of LESN for a number of years. Well done and an award very well earned, Frances!

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Assessment—Next Generation
Making the transition from paper and pencil testing to online assessment is the topic of this Pearson roadmap. The roadmap was designed to explain how states will benefit from new generation learning and to help states navigate challenges and mitigate the issues they will face as they transition. For a full print version click.

Class Size
Brown Center on Education Policy at Brookings published a new report on the research behind class size and what state policymakers need to consider.

Closing the Achievement Gap
NCES’s NAEP publications include informative reports on Hispanic versus White achievement gaps and on Black versus White Achievement Gaps. A reader is able to look at the full reports, executive summaries of the reports and view resources for understanding the achievement gaps.

Community Colleges
Jobs for the Future has released a new report examining what five community colleges learned about catering to the needs of dislocated, jobless and otherwise low-skilled adults in Michigan.

Demographics
A report from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey and the Current Population Survey presents a valuable source of school enrollment data.
**Employability**
Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce released a report indicating the nation will need an additional 20 million workers with at least some postsecondary education over the next 15 years to meet future economic requirements.

Nebraska’s Governor Dave Heineman recently signed legislation that creates new internship opportunities for college and university students.

**Evaluations**
WestEd released a new brief giving snapshots of currently operating state policies and systems of principal evaluation in six states.

**Family Involvement**
Harvard Family Research Project has a new issue brief looking at preparing educators to engage families for student achievement.

**Finance**
University of New Mexico Center for Education Policy Research completed a study of the cost effectiveness of the 12th grade. Accompanying the study is a report from the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee.

Report from Education Resource Strategies (ERS) takes that tack of finding the silver-lining. The authors envision the adoption of serious school reforms in K–12 education, forced by state budgetary constraints and a sluggish national economy.

**Financial Aid**
This Education Trust study finds the average low-income family must contribute an amount roughly equivalent to 72% of its annual household income just to send one child to a four-year college.

An Illinois Accountability Report documents that families with incomes between about $18,000 and $66,000 are losing ground on a variety of measures of college affordability.

**High School Issues**
This new study from the Alliance for Excellent Education describes the multiple pathways to graduation efforts in New York City and its success in helping off-track students succeed.

**International Comparisons**
The last two chapters of a yet unpublished Marc Tucker book answer the question: *What would the education policies and practices in the United States be if they were based on the policies and practices of the countries that now lead the world in student performance?*

Latest OECD publication reviews PISA results for the strongest national performers in successfully reforming education and points out the lessons for the United States.

**Labor Relations**
The U.S. Department of Education released a report of a February 2011 conference at which over 150 districts discussed ways to advance student achievement through labor management collaboration. This paper highlights 12 districts which have accomplished collaboration and how they accomplished it.

**P-3 Initiatives**
This report of the first year of RAND’s multiyear evaluation of the Hawai‘i P–3 initiative examined plans, activities, and policy in two demonstration sites and at the P–20 level.
Proprietary Education
NCSL staff member Michelle Liu has pulled together lots of good information on the current activities in the area of for-profit colleges and universities. Check out the link on this page to the new magazine article and the questions and answers interview with Sandy Baum from the College Board.

Readiness
This policy brief from the Alliance for Excellent Education examines deeper learning—the knowledge and skills all students need to succeed in college, a career, and life. They explain the necessity of the deeper learning and analyze the growing body of global evidence supporting its wide scale implementation.

Yet another Alliance for Excellent Education report looks at how high school reform can reduce the nation’s wasted remediation dollars.

Student Supports
Latest addition to the ECS Research Studies Database analyzes the effect of supplemental education services on student achievement.

Teacher Issues
Thomas Fordham Institute has a new Ed Short looking at how public charter schools handle pensions for their teachers. Some states give the charter schools the freedom to opt out of the teacher-pension system. How many charter schools take it?

TWO POINTS OF ACTION:

- The time is quickly approaching when we will select new LESN members to serve as ECS’ representatives for the LESN Steering Committee. Please let me know if you are interested in this opportunity or if you want more information.
- We are attempting to get ahead of the game with research for interim studies and task forces. Please let us know the topics of your special task forces or interim studies and the timelines for reporting.

Melodye Bush

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.