Heads Up on Education Issues

November 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 suggest for the next issue, please let us know.

Adult Learning
More than 10 million working-age adult in the 16 Southern Regional Education Board states never earned a high school diploma. Their report outlines each state’s status in adult learning and the steps that can lead to further education and higher-paying jobs for these adults.

Budgets
NASBO has released the newest version of the Fiscal Condition of States.

Bullying
This IES report comes from the REL-Northeast and Islands where they sorted through the characteristics of bullying, bullying victims and the school climates associated with increased reporting of bullying to school officials.

Completion
State legislators have the power to enact effective policies that can increase the number of students who earn a certificate or degree. Before developing policies, legislators will want to know exactly what the problems are in their state. A new NCSL brief gives tips for gathering essential information and data related to college completion.

A second NCSL brief highlights some strategies states are exploring to improve college completion rates.

A Southern Regional Education Board examined many strategies public institutions are using to help more students earn bachelor’s degrees. The report summarizes 15 institutions’ successful approaches.

Dropout/Graduation Rates
From the National Academies Press (free summary) - High School Dropout, Graduation, and Completion Rates: Better Data, Better Measures, Better Decisions

Earliest Learning—May Be Biggest Payoff
North Carolina’s More at Four program appears to be making a difference.

Mathematics
Maintaining our innovative edge in the world depends on developing a highly qualified cadre of scientists and engineers. Unfortunately the U.S. students fell well below most countries in math performance according to this report from Harvard’s Program on Education Policy and Governance.
The National Center for Postsecondary Research released a report on how to improve developmental mathematics education in community colleges.

**Online Learning**
This is the latest in a series of annual reports that begin in 2004. The reports examine the status of K-12 online education across the country and provides an overview of the latest policies, practices and trends affecting online learning programs across all 50 states.

**Postsecondary Faculty**
This IES report takes a first look at employees in postsecondary institutions in Fall 2009 and at the salaries of full-time instructional staff.

**Proprietary Schools**
Enrollments in proprietary schools have risen 236% over the last decade. While their stockholders are making out like bandits, their students --often low-income or minority--generally find little academic success.

**Rural Schools**
OK. This isn’t a report but it is an amazing statistic on the states with more than 10% of the rural students learning the English Language. And the winners are--In New Mexico, 33.8% of rural students are English Language Learners. The other nine states are California, where 26.7% of rural students are learning English, Arizona (24.3%); Texas (19.0%), Nevada (17.0%), Alaska (15.1%), Florida (14.0%), Washington (12.5%), and Colorado (11.1%).

**STEM**
This link will take you to a tool for advancing change and innovation in science and mathematics teacher preparation and development.

**Teacher Performance Assessments**
This report from the Center for American Progress was authored by Linda Darling Hammond. The focus of the report is how teacher performance assessments can measure and improve teaching.

**Teaching Quality**
Public Impact has released an excellent report on how to leverage the impact of the good teachers we currently have and extend our reach to attract more good teachers by bold recruiting efforts. Essentially using our best teachers to close the gaps and raise the bar.

This CALDER report looks at teacher layoffs from the viewpoint of seniority vs measures of effectiveness.

**Waiting for Superman**
CALDER research sheds some light on the debate over teacher quality, charter schools and education policy. CALDER expert Eric Hanushek was featured in this controversial film.

You may have already seen these recent ECS publications:

*From the Research Studies Database—*
- One new entry looks at pre-K engagement and describes patterns of children’s engagement in pre-K classrooms exploring whether some patterns of engagement bring about greater gains or are particularly beneficial for poor children.
- **HIGHER ED ARTICULATION** - Another newly entered study describes challenges associated with facilitating and measuring transfer success.
- **MONEY MATTERS** - Read a summary of a study examining the relationships among educational expenditures, student engagement and learning outcomes for first-year college students and seniors.
• RETAINING TEACHERS OF COLOR - Another study looks at research on retention and turnover of teachers of color, with a focus on new teachers who are most likely to leave the profession.

• CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION - An entry investigates the role of career and technical education programs in influencing the post-college earning of students.

• MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE TEACHERS - Another entry seeks to determine whether there is a sufficient supply of mathematics and science teachers.

• Another entry looks at “Catching Up in Community Colleges: Academic Preparation and Transfer to Four-Year Institutions”

REMEDIAL EDUCATION - A paper from ECS’ Getting Past Go argues that states and institutions need to transcend their traditional approaches of regulating access to remedial education in order to cut instructional costs and maintain academic excellence.

Two new blogs from ECS’ Jennifer Dounay Zinth:

• The P-20 Blog--your source for news, policy and research related to state efforts to better align early learning, K-12 and postsecondary education efforts.

• ECS Ed Watch aims to be your source for innovative, ahead-of-the-curve state policy approaches and the best new research with significant implications for education policy.

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

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