Heads Up on Education Issues

October 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.

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Choice

New from the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools is a report on the nation’s largest charter school communities.

The What Works Clearinghouse reviewed a study that examined the effect of charter school attendance on annual student achievement growth in math and reading. The study analyzed data from a large sample of students in grades 4 through 9 in Indiana from 2004 to 2008.

Citizenship

This fact sheet provides an overview of key national findings from the annual Civic Health Assessment. The assessment is produced by the Corporation for National and Community Service and the National Conference on Citizenship.

Common Core State Standards

David Conley and others from the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) have released “Lining Up: The Relationship Between the Common Core State Standards and Five Sets of Comparison Standards.” Very enlightening.

Finance

School Facilities

We just ran across this 2010 50-state look that includes state profiles and a brief description of each state’s funding mechanisms for school construction and modernization within each profile. Summary charts are included. The report is from the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities.

Quick Glance at School Finance – Volume II: Here are 50-state profiles of school finance formulas. The Wisconsin Center on the Advancement of Postsecondary Education released a report on the patterns and length of time it takes for states to bounce back from cuts in state appropriations.
International Comparisons

This report describes key education outcomes and contexts of education in the Group of Eight (G-8) Countries — Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States. Results are drawn from the OECD’s ongoing Indicators of Education Systems program as well as PISA, which is coordinated by the OECD.

Leadership

States and districts should not be bound to traditional principal preparation programs when developing school leaders, according to a new report from the Center for American Progress. The report looks at eight states that are expanding the school leader pool and improving principal training. The authors also looked at eight states that it says are lagging when it comes to these issues.

Literacy (Early Literacy)

Common Sense Media, a nonprofit children’s advocacy organization, released a report on children’s media use in America. Since 2005, the amount of time children from 6 months to 6 years old spend reading or being read to has dropped by 10 minutes a day. The number of minutes those children spend with screen media has increased by 42 minutes a day.

This new report examines students who participated in school readiness assessments in 19 school districts in California. Authors addressed: (1) how attendance in early grades (kindergarten and 1st grade) relates to 3rd-grade performance; and (2) whether the association between attendance and later outcomes depends on the readiness skills that students possess when they enter kindergarten.


Physical Activity

The American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance has released the results of a 2011 program survey. Read the executive summary.

State Data Systems

SREB states have led the nation in implementing DQC’s 10 essential elements of effective data systems. DQC and SREB partnered recently to host leaders from the SREB states at a forum to discuss boosting the capacity of their systems. SREB’s report looks at the region’s efforts and describes actions states can take to maximize data use.

In 2010, the New Hampshire Task Force on Effective Teaching began planning for a system to support effective teaching in the state. This report contains details from this effort.

STEM

This report from the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economics and Statistics Administration follows an analysis of labor market outcomes and gender disparities among STEM workers. They found that regardless of race, higher college graduation rates are associated with higher shares of workers with STEM jobs.

The Center on Education and the Workforce released a 50-state report on STEM, including STEM core competencies. Here is the executive summary.
Student Achievement

An NCES report presents estimates of rates in 2009, provides data about trends over nearly the last four decades, and examines the characteristics of high school dropouts and high school completers in 2009. For a jaw-dropper — 607,000 students dropped out of high school in 2008-09!

Teacher Issues

As leaders around the country struggle to overhaul America's controversial and precarious public-sector pensions, this Fordham study draws on examples from diverse fields to provide a primer on successful pension reform.

This issue of The Progress of Education Reform describes pay for performance models and presents recent research findings and their implications for policy.

This policy brief from the Annenberg Institute examines the history and intent of seniority rules and some of the underlying issues being raised in the current debate.

The National Council on Teacher Quality recently released a cross-state look at emerging teacher evaluations.

Technology

This paper, from the Center for Technology Innovation at Brookings, examines new models of instruction made possible by digital technologies.

From the Digital Learning Council, a diverse group of more than 100 leaders in education, government, business, technology and members of policy think tanks: 10 Elements of High Quality Digital Learning. The report is essentially a roadmap for states to follow for reforming digital learning.

Tuition and Financial Aid

While tuition and fees continue to rise at a fast pace, particularly at public colleges and universities struggling with declining state appropriations, federal financial aid policies have kept down the price students pay for a college degree, according to two annual reports on tuition and financial aid from The College Board.

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

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