Heads Up on Current Education Issues
September 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!**

**Assisting Children of Military Personnel**
This short [report](#) and related [presentation](#) highlight the findings and recommendations of recent studies that quantify the needs of military children.

**Legislative Updates in Civic Education**
While the role that civic education plays in public schools has been reduced in the past 50 years, the civic education field continues to make significant strides in identifying best practices for civic education. As evident in this 50-state policy [scan](#) by the National Center for Learning and Civic Engagement (NCLCE), some states have recognized such best practices by enacting policy on "civics," "citizenship education," and "social studies."

**Recent Changes in Postsecondary Governance**
Between 2011 and 2013, five states transformed their postsecondary governance systems: California, Connecticut, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Washington. California disbanded its coordinating board, while the other four states modified the scope and roles of their coordinating boards. This [document](#) provides a brief summary of the governance reforms and links to relevant information sources.

**Adopting Textbooks**
States use one of two methods to select textbooks used in their schools. Twenty-nine states allow local agencies or schools to choose textbooks. Twenty-one states and three territories-known as textbook adoption states-choose at the state level. ECS offers an updated [review](#) for each state, territory, and the District of Columbia, listing which entities choose texts and whether texts are free. Some include provisions for minority representation and citizen review.

To see what’s happened legislatively in 2013, click [here](#)!
New from NCSL!

NCSL Fall Forum (Washington, DC, December 4-6) - Registration Now Open
The NCSL Fall Forum is where legislators and legislative staff come together to tackle the critical issues facing states and develop the States’ Agenda on Capitol Hill. Attendees have the opportunity to discuss policy with national experts, work on pressing issues as part of NCSL’s standing committees, advocate for the states on Lobby Day and participate in special briefings developed for legislative staff. Register now!

Evaluation School Principals
This report offers guidance for approaching the issues of evaluating school principals. It provides background information, discusses the state legislative role, provides information about what legislators need to know and discusses current research. It also features seven policy areas states are using to strengthen principal evaluations specific actions state legislators can take to improve principal evaluation systems, and concludes recommendations for specific actions state legislators can take to improve principal evaluation systems.
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- Attendance -

**The Attendance Imperative: How States Can Advance Achievement by Reducing Chronic Absence** – This report provides steps state policymakers can take to get a better handle on chronic absenteeism, which places anywhere from 5 million to 7.5 million students “academically at risk.” It includes adopting a standard definition of chronic absence and regularly reporting absence statistics, down to grade levels and subgroups.

Source: Attendance Works

- Career/Technical Education -

**Balancing Career and Technical Education With Academic Coursework: The Consequences for Mathematics Achievement in High School** – New from the ECS Research Studies Database - Federal legislation has attempted to move career and technical education (CTE) from a segregated component of the high school curriculum to an integrated element that jointly improves both academic and career readiness. While this study found integrating CTE and the high school curriculum didn’t hurt math achievement, the federal Perkins III act was an investment that emphasized academic “upscaling” of CTE courses with the hope that this would enhance rigor and bolster academic achievement. These expectations, at least at the time of the ELS:2002 study, did not materialize.

- Charter Schools -

**Education Needs to Further Examine Data Collection on English Language Learners in Charter Schools** – This report finds that 37% of charter schools in 2010-11 did not report the number of English-language learners in their data collections for the federal government. While a blank field could mean that the charter did not have any ELL students, because of the high number of blank fields, the GAO suspects that it is a result of non-reporting instead.

Source: U.S. Government Accountability Office

- Common Core State Standards -

**Curricular Coherence and the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics** - New from the ECS Research Studies Database - Debate persists about the quality of the Common Core State Standards for mathematics as 46 states move toward implementation. Comparing the Common Core standards to the highest achieving nations on the 1995 Third International Mathematics Study, study authors found a high degree of similarity between the two tests. Then they found a wide variation in mathematics standards among the states and, further, that states closest to embracing Common Core standards did better on the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress.

**Year 3 of Implementing the Common Core State Standards: An Overview of States’ Progress and Challenges** – This report, the second in a series of CEP reports based on the 2013 survey, provides an overview of state efforts to implement the Common Core. This report discusses state views of the rigor of the CCSS, their impact on learning, and necessary changes in curriculum and instruction; state timelines for teaching curricula aligned to the CCSS; state activities to implement the CCSS, including collaborative efforts with other states and the impact of state funding cuts; implementation challenges; and the capacity of state education agencies (SEAs) to carry out CCSS related activities.

Source: Center on Education Policy
- Competency-Based Pathways -

Advancing Competency-Based Pathways to College and Career Readiness: A State Policy Framework for Graduation Requirements, Assessment and Accountability - Designed to help states implement the Common Core by adopting competency-based pathways, this framework focuses on graduation requirements, assessment, and accountability. Students advance by demonstrating mastery, and competencies are designed to include learning objectives that empower them. Assessments are to be meaningful learning experiences. The framework is flexible, recognizing that some states will want to keep the current system intact, while others will want to reimagine the system and opt for a whole different animal.
Source: Achieve

- Early Warning Systems -

Just the Right Mix: Using an Early Warning Indicators Approach to Identify Potential Dropouts Across All Grades - Researchers applied longitudinal data from Montgomery County (Maryland) Public Schools to identify early warning indicators (EWIs) across all grades -- even the early grades -- for dropping out. Using attendance, behavior, and course performance patterns, they looked at grades 1, 3, 6, and 9 and identified EWIs. Regarding attendance, the telling sign was absences of nine or more times for first graders, and three or more times for grades 3, 6, and 9. Suspension at grades 1, 3, 6, and 9 in or out of school one or more times doubled the odds of dropping out of high school. Being below grade level in reading and/or mathematics also doubled chances of dropping out.
Source: Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University

Theory and Application of Early Warning Systems for High School and Beyond – New from the ECS Research Studies Database - the ability to identify at-risk students prior to their high school transition, and intervene on their behalf, is perhaps the single most important goal of an early-warning system.

- English Language Learners -

Closing the Gap for English Language Learners - Among the fastest-growing student groups are those not proficient enough in English to benefit adequately from classroom instruction, according to this brief, so it has become increasingly important that assessments establish access and accommodation strategies to address these students' linguistic capacities and needs. Massachusetts has developed new standards and assessments and moved ahead with educator preparation and development by imposing requirements at every level for training in Sheltered English Immersion (SEI). Between 2012 and 2016, 26,000 teachers and administrators will be required to complete SEI training.
Source: Rennie Center

What We Know About Second Language Acquisition: A Synthesis From Four Perspectives – New from the ECS Research Studies Database, this study demonstrates the value of integrating information from four bodies of work (foreign language education, child language research, sociocultural studies and psycholinguistics) in thinking about perspectives on second language acquisition.

- Postsecondary: Performance-Based Funding -

Performance-Based Funding: The National Landscape - Despite changes in state postsecondary performance funding policies over the years, there still is no evidence that these strategies have a big
effect on student outcomes, according to a new report. The authors advise that states dedicate a much larger share of tax dollars to rewarding student success, align performance measures with workforce goals, and allow different types of institutions to meet different standards.

Source: The University of Alabama, Education Policy Center

- Postsecondary – Tuition -

**Differential Pricing in Undergraduate Education: Effects on Degree Production by Field** – New from the ECS Research Studies Database: The researchers argue that currently, colleges and universities charge the same tuition for undergraduate programs, regardless of faculty, facility, and instructional costs. With state support for higher education declining, however, institutions are looking for innovative ways to raise tuition revenue. This study analyzes how setting different tuition levels for engineering, business, and nursing degree programs affects enrollment and degree share of these majors at colleges.

- School Choice/Parental Involvement -

**School Choice Policies and Racial Segregation: Where White Parents’ Good Intentions, Anxiety, and Privilege Collide** – New from the ECS Research Studies Database, this study examines white, upper-middle class parents' interactions with a market-based school choice policy and finds two contradictory yet simultaneous trends. Upper-middle class white parents are bothered by racial and socioeconomic segregation that results from the school choice policy but are also anxious and concerned that their children be enrolled in the school that has the best educational program.

Teacher Evaluation: Social-Emotional Learning

**Teaching the Whole Child: Instructional Practices That Support Social-Emotional Learning in Three Teacher Evaluation Frameworks** - How can teacher evaluation systems help teachers develop students' social-emotional competencies? This paper first identifies instructional practices that promote student social-emotional learning, which in turn promote student academic learning. The paper then shows how three popular teacher evaluation systems (the Danielson Framework for Teaching, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System observation instrument, and the Marzano observation protocol) feature practices that influence not only student academic learning but also student social and emotional competencies.

Source: American Institutes for Research

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**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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