Heads Up on Education Issues

January 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.

Accountability
A new report from Fordham tracks 2000 schools (both charter and traditional school district) judged as low-performing schools under NCLB standards. Results were generally dismal.

Common Core Standards
This issue brief from Achieve/American Council on Education/SHEEO describes key areas that will require active participation from higher education leaders and faculty from a broad array of disciplines.

This Center on Education Policy report, from a survey of state officials, discusses efforts to adopt and implement the common core standards in reading and math.

Early College High School
North Carolina’s early college high schools are creating more positive environments for students—resulting in improved attendance and increased number of students on track for college.

Postsecondary
If you are curious about the top policy issues in postsecondary education, check out this list from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities list.

The annual Grapevine report shows what states are spending on higher education.

Readiness
This Education Trust report documents how many applicants are turned away by the military because they lack basic reading, math, and problem-solving skills needed to serve in the armed forces. State-by-state data is included.

Rural Schools
Despite efforts to encourage a focus on rural communities in the federal Investing in Innovation (i3) competition only three of the winning proposals are “authentically rural” according to a study by the Rural School and Community Trust. The report recommends several changes to any second round of grants.
State Reports
This white paper was released by the state board in Pennsylvania which discusses implementation of the common core standards in their state.

Teacher Policies
The National Council on Teacher Quality has released its 2010 Blueprint for Change. The Blueprint updates changes in state laws, rules and regulations that have occurred in the last year, including key policy areas such as teacher preparation, evaluation, tenure, dismissal and alternative certification. Go to this link and select a state.

You may have already seen these recent ECS publications:

Two new ECS StateNotes on governance issues:
One describes four state education governance models that 40 states use and provides notes about the states and territories whose governance models do not conform to any of the four models.

Another identifies states in which P-16/P-20 governance has been fully or partially consolidated in a single entity. This StateNote also identifies where early learning falls under the purview of an entity that administers both K-12 and higher education.

Here are the most recent entries from the ECS Research Studies Database:
- GED – Analyzes differences among dropouts, GEDs and high school graduates, discusses labor market performance and educational attainment of GEDs
- History and current state of mayoral involvement in public education
- Summary evaluates whether funding the position of reading coaches in middle school is associated with improvements in average annual achievement growth in reading and mathematics
- Investigation of whether a high-quality preschool program can reduce the negative effects of low family income and low birth weight on the need for special education and grade retention
- Does required or voluntary service in adolescent have equivalent effects on civic participation in adulthood

Did you know
ECS staff members can provide testimony, state policy information and answers to your questions on a number of issues:
- Governance: Contact Kathy Christie (kchristie@ecs.org)
- Course credit by demonstrating proficiency: Contact Jennifer Dounay Zinth (jdounay@ecs.org)
- Finance issues: Contact Michael Griffith (mgriffith@ecs.org)
- Teacher evaluation: Contact Barbara Thompson (bthompson@ecs.org)

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

Contacts:
Melodye Bush
Researcher/LESN Coordinator
Education Commission of the States
700 Broadway, Suite 810
Denver, CO 80203

Sara V. Shelton
Policy Specialist, Education Program
National Conference of State Legislatures
7700 E. First Place
Denver, CO 80230