# Heads Up on Current Education Issues

**February 2012**

*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.

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- Assessments -

**State High School Tests: Changes in State Policies and the Impact of the College and Career Readiness Movement**

This 10th installment of CEP’s annual study of high school exit exams and other assessments finds that fewer states are requiring students to pass a high school exit exam, though testing in other areas has increased. The report, based on a survey of all 50 state departments of education, discusses state policies associated with high school exit exams, college entrance exams (such as the ACT or SAT), and college and career readiness assessments. (Center on Education Policy)

- At-Risk -

**Effective Teachers for At-Risk or Highly Mobile Students: What are the Dispositions and Behaviors of Award-Winning Teachers?**

A recently-entered research study in the ECS database examines what constitutes effective teaching, particularly with at-risk or highly mobile students.

- Charter Schools -

**Charter-School Management Organizations: Diverse Strategies and Diverse Student Impacts**

This report presents findings on CMO students, resources, and practices as well as CMO impacts on student achievement in middle school, high school graduation, and postsecondary enrollment. It also examines the relationships between CMO practices and impacts. (Center on Reinventing Public Education)

**The State of Charter School Authorizing 2011**

This annual report provides an overview of the policies, practices, and characteristics of the nation’s largest charter school authorizers, as well as a sampling of smaller authorizing entities. It also builds upon the data presented in previous reports on NACSA’s authorizer survey. (National Association of Charter School Authorizers)

- Community Schools -

**Achieving Results Through Community School Partnerships: How District and Community Leaders are Building Effective, Sustainable Relationships**

This paper outlines how school and community leaders develop a common vision for a community schools strategy and explores six key strategies that successful community school initiatives use to build effective partnerships with local government agencies, teachers’ unions, and other organizations. (Center for American Progress)

- Data -

**2012 Public Education Primer**

This report highlights important and sometimes little-known facts concerning the U.S. education system, how things have changed over time, and how they may change in the future. Together these facts provide a comprehensive picture of the nation’s public schools, including data about students, teachers, funding, achievement, management, and non-academic services. (Center on Education Policy)

- Distance Learning -

**The Cost of On-Line Learning**

In this paper, the Parthenon Group uses interviews with more than fifty vendors and online-schooling experts to estimate today’s average per-pupil cost for a variety of schooling models, traditional and online, and presents a nuanced analysis of the important variance in cost between different school designs. These ranges—from $5,100 to $7,700 for full-time virtual schools, and $7,600 to $10,200 for the blended version—highlight both the potential for low-cost online schooling and the need for better data on costs and outcomes in order for policymakers to
reach confident conclusions related to the productivity and efficiency of these promising new models. (Fordham Institute)

- English Language Learners (ELLs) -

National Evaluation of Title III Implementation Supplemental Report: Exploring Approaches To Setting English Language Proficiency Performance Criteria and Monitoring English Learner Progress

The Education Department released a guidebook to help states set new proficiency standards and academic achievement targets for English-language learners. The report describes methods policymakers may use to determine what English proficiency means for students, how long it should take students to reach it and how to factor in proficiency levels when measuring academic progress. (US Department of Education)

- P-3 Attendance -

Children's Attendance Rates and Quality of Teacher-Child Interactions in At-Risk Preschool Classrooms: Contribution to Children's Expressive Language Growth

A recently-entered research study in the ECS database explores whether daily attendance in classrooms with high-quality teacher-child interactions is associated with increased rates of language growth among children from lower socioeconomic status (SES) homes.

- Pre-K -

State Pre-K Assessment Policies: Issues and Status

This report provides a review of how states are assessing preschool students, delves into the challenges of assessing young learners, and spells out sound practices states can consider using. (Educational Testing Service)

Building Blocks for a Strong Preschool to Early Elementary Education System

This testimony highlights what we know about differences in school readiness, the potential for high quality early learning experiences to prepare children for success in school, and the core building blocks of strong P–3 systems that address readiness gaps and support children’s development as they progress through the early elementary grades. (RAND Corporation)

- Proficiency-Based Learning -

State Strategies for Awarding Credit to Support Student Learning

This issue brief argues that awarding credits based on student mastery of content and skills can remove barriers to increasing student readiness for college and careers and reveals the diversity of approaches taken by states as they try to create more flexibility for students through virtual and other alternative learning options. (National Governors Association)

- Postsecondary Access -

Reducing Barrier to Postsecondary Education

This report makes recommendations to Idaho about ways to improve postsecondary graduation rates, such as providing more high school guidance counselors and need-based scholarships. The report also offers other recommendations and identifies three main barriers that Idahoans face in continuing education after high school: readiness, access and affordability. (Idaho Legislature)
- School Safety -

Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2011
This report includes the most recent data on school crime and student safety, and covers topics such as victimization, teacher injury, bullying, weapons, and student use of drugs and alcohol. Indicators of crime and safety are compared across different population subgroups and over time. (National Center for Education Statistics)

- Special Populations -

Asian American and Pacific Islander Students: Equity and the Achievement Gap
A recently entered research study in the ECS database explores the achievements of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) students. The authors found that while many educators have a monolithic view of AAPI students as high achievers with little need for educational services, evidence indicates that AAPI students are diverse in their achievements, and demonstrate a continuum of academic performance.

- Standards -

The State of State Science Standards 2012
This report provides analyses for the K-12 science standards in place in all 50 States and the District of Columbia. The average grade across all states is a C and in twenty-seven jurisdictions, the standards earn a D or below. The authors suggest that states can up their standards by looking to high scoring states and the NAEP but must also consider the other factors that contribute to strong academic achievement. (Fordham Institute)

- Teaching Quality -

Movin’ It and Improvin’ It! Using Both Education Strategies to Increase Teaching Effectiveness
This report considers how teacher evaluations should be used in order to increase teacher effectiveness. While most schools use strategies that move ineffective teachers out through transfers and dismissals and bring effective teachers in through recruitment and incentive pay, the authors suggest that these strategies must be coupled with proven professional development program that will help current teachers improve. (Center for American Progress)

Preparing and Credentialing the Nation’s Teachers: The Secretary’s Eighth Report on Teacher Quality Based on Data Provided for 2008, 2009 and 2010
The U.S. Department of Education released its latest report on how states are preparing and credentialing teachers. The report is based on state-submitted data from three consecutive years. (US Department of Education)

The Long-Term Impacts of Teachers: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood
A recently entered research study in the ECS database explores the long term impacts of high quality teachers, as identified through value-added measures. The authors found that good teachers have substantial long term impacts on students, that value-added measures are helpful in identifying such teachers, and that improving the quality of teaching, whether using value-added or other tools, is likely to have large economic and social impacts.

Review of State Policies on Teacher Induction
This report provides the first comprehensive look at teacher induction policies in each of the 50 states. A summary for each state provides existing policies related to 10 key criteria most critical to the provision of universal, high-quality induction and mentoring support for beginning educators. The state summaries capture all relevant policies, statutes, regulations, induction program standards, and other guidance on new teacher induction and mentoring. (New Teacher Center)