Heads Up on Current Education Issues

April 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.

- **Community Colleges**: Reclaiming the American Dream: A Report from the 21st Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges; Closing the Door, Increasing the Gap: Who’s not going to (community) college?
- **College Readiness**: College for All: Gaps Between Desirable and Actual P-12 Math Achievement Trajectories for College Readiness
- **Curriculum – Arts**: Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools
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- **Drop-Out Prevention**: Learn Anytime, Anywhere: Rethinking How Students Earn Credit Beyond School Hours
- **Extended Learning Time**: Off the Clock: What More Time Can (and Can’t) Do for School Turnarounds; States Need to Fill in the Gaps on Expanded Learning Time
- **Finance**: How School Districts Can Stretch the School Dollar; Race to the Top: What Have We Learned From the States So Far? A State-by-State Evaluation of Race to the Top Performance
- **Leadership**: Estimating the Effect of Leaders on Public Sector Productivity: The Case of School Principals; Driving Alignment and Implementation: The Role of the Principalship in ESEA Flexibility
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Community Colleges

Reclaiming the American Dream: A Report from the 21st Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges – This commission examined the challenges and opportunities facing the fast-growing community college sector of higher education. The authors argue that a highly educated population is fundamental to economic growth and a vibrant democracy, and that community colleges play an integral role in ‘reclaiming the American dream’. The authors suggest that community colleges require a dramatic redesign of their mission, and most critically, their students’ educational experiences.

Source: American Association of Community Colleges, 2012

Closing the Door, Increasing the Gap: Who’s not going to (community) college? - This report analyzes trends toward expanding caps on community college enrollment and narrowing the educational programs available for students. The authors argue that these actions could contribute to denying access to higher education for large numbers of lower-income students and students of color.

Source: Center for the Future of Higher Education, April 2012

College Readiness

College for All: Gaps Between Desirable and Actual P-12 Math Achievement Trajectories for College Readiness - This recently entered research study in the ECS database investigates gaps between actual and desirable math achievement trajectories for students’ college readiness. The results suggest that entrance into and completion of two-year versus four-year college degree programs requires substantially different levels of math achievement in earlier education periods. Further, the authors found that meeting national versus state proficiency standards leads to differences in postsecondary education outcomes and can mean the difference between bachelor's and associate's degree attainment.

Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - This study examines the extent to which students received instruction in the arts in public elementary and secondary schools; the facilities and resources available for arts education instruction; and the preparation, work environments, and instructional practices of music and visual arts specialists and non-arts classroom teachers.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, April 2012

Curriculum – Science

Untapped Potential: The Status of Middle School Science Education in California - This report summarizes research that examines the status of science education in California’s middle school classrooms. Findings indicate that middle schools have the potential to provide students with high quality science education, but significant challenges limit opportunities for science learning, leaving that potential unfulfilled. California middle schools offer dedicated time for science, access to facilities and a teaching force that is fairly well prepared for teaching the subject. But students often lack access to science instruction in earlier grades and arrive at middle school unprepared and uninterested.

Source: The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning at WestEd, 2012
Supporting Education Policy and Practice Through Common Standards - This policymaker's guide addresses how common data standards can ensure the quality, comparability, and efficient sharing of data.
Source: Data Quality Campaign, April 2012

- Dropout Prevention -

Learn Anytime, Anywhere: Rethinking How Students Earn Credit Beyond School Hours - In this brief, the authors explore how states are providing the kind of flexibility that helps students see education as the path to the future they want for themselves. They offer policy recommendations to bring down bureaucratic barriers and encourage schools to collaborate with community partners such as art and science institutions to provide off-campus learning opportunities.
Source: The After-School Corporation, March 2012

- Extended Learning Time -

Off the Clock: What More Time Can (and Can’t) Do for School Turnarounds - This report looks at the facts—and the myths—about school calendars and schedules. Extended learning time is one of the key elements of the federal government's SIG program. More than 90 percent of the schools in the program have selected one of two options—"turnaround" and "transformation"—that mandate more time. This report studies how schools are actually using this "increased learning time".
Source: Education Sector, March 2012

States Need to Fill in the Gaps on Expanded Learning Time - Most of the dozen states that have received flexibility under No Child Left Behind don't have very good plans in place when it comes to extending learning time, a key piece of the Department of Education's requirements for turning around low-performing schools. This analysis provides a helpful lens to examine each state's approach to increasing learning time, with states grouped based on the level of detail in the proposals for increasing learning time in their NCLB waiver applications.
Source: Center for American Progress, April 2012

- Finance -

How School Districts Can Stretch the School Dollar - This policy brief provides a useful tool for navigating the financial challenges of the current school-funding climate, complete with clear dos and don'ts for anyone involved in or concerned with local education budgets. The author argues that quick fixes won't solve the problem, nor will slashing teacher salaries. Instead, creative, thoughtful, and fundamental changes are needed to address our budget crisis without hurting children.
Source: Fordham Institute, April 2012

Race to the Top: What Have We Learned From the States So Far? A State-by-State Evaluation of Race to the Top Performance - This report examines the efforts of states that won Race to the Top (RTTT) grants. The authors evaluated the states on their efforts and benchmarked their success against a set of key indicators. A summary is available here.
Source: Center for American Progress, March 2012
- Leadership -

**Estimating the Effect of Leaders on Public Sector Productivity: The Case of School Principals** - The authors estimate principals’ contributions by tracking student-learning gains during various leaders’ tenure at a given school, controlling for other school-level factors. Findings indicate that an effective principal’s impact on student achievement in a school can be very large.

Source: National Bureau of Economic Research, January 2012

**Driving Alignment and Implementation: The Role of the Principalship in ESEA Flexibility** – The flexibility that the U.S. Department of Education is offering under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) provides the chance to align critical systems – standards, assessments, school accountability, and educator evaluation – with raised expectations for all students. The authors provide concrete recommendations, focused primarily on Principle 3 (Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership) for states to consider in preparing applications for ESEA flexibility.

Source: New Leaders, December 2011

- P-3 -

**The State of Preschool 2011** – This is the newest edition of an annual report profiling state-funded prekindergarten programs in the United States. The first section offers a summary of the data, and describes national trends for enrollment in, quality of, and spending on state-funded preschool. The second section presents detailed profiles outlining each state’s policies with respect to preschool access, quality standards, and resources for the 2010-2011 program year. The last section of the report contains appendices, which are available online only.

Source: National Institute for Early Education Research, 2012

**Early Elementary Performance and Attendance in Baltimore City Schools’ Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten** - This study of Baltimore’s pre-K and kindergarten programs found that students who were chronically absent were less likely to be kindergarten-ready and more likely to be retained than their peers with regular attendance.

Source: Baltimore Education Research Consortium, March 2012

- Postsecondary -

**Enrollment in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall 2010; Financial Statistics, Fiscal Year 2010; and Graduation Rates, Selected Cohorts, 2002-07 First Look** - This report presents findings from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) spring 2011 data collection. This collection includes student financial aid for the 2009-10 academic year; enrollments for fall 2010; graduation rates; and financial statistics for fiscal year 2010, such as revenues and operating expenditures. Particularly noteworthy is Table 3 on in-migration/out-migration of college students by state.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, March 2012

- Postsecondary Access -

**Make Me a Match: Helping Low-Income and First-Generation Students Make Good College Choices** - This policy brief describes an intervention program called the College Match Program, which targets a population that has been overlooked by many other college success initiatives: moderately to high-
achieving students who are prepared for college but need advice and support to choose college wisely.
Source: MDRC, April 2012

- Postsecondary Attainment -

**A Stronger Nation Through Higher Education** - This special report provides a report card on the nation’s efforts to work toward 60% of Americans having a high-quality postsecondary credential by the year 2025. Using the most recent Census data (2010), the authors provide detailed breakdowns of college-attainment data for each state.
Source: Lumina Foundation, March 2012

- Postsecondary Completion -

**Finding Your Workforce: The Top 25 Institutions Graduating Latinos** - This first brief in the *Finding Your Workforce* series provides a summary of Latinos’ college completion data for 2009-10, along with a list of the top 25 institutions at each academic level graduating Latinos from certificates to doctoral degrees. Future briefs in the *Finding Your Workforce* series will provide lists of the top institutions graduating Latinos by specific disciplines (STEM, health, business, education, and liberal arts) complimented by more detailed information and examples of institutional efforts to improve Latinos’ college completion linked to the workforce.
Source: Excelencia in Education, 2012

- Postsecondary Success -

**Remediation: Higher Education’s Bridge to Nowhere** - This report examines just-in-time support as an alternative to current unsuccessful remediation programs.
Source: Complete College America, April 2012

- Rural -

**The 2nd National Summit on the Role of Education in Economic Development in Rural America** - ECS held its annual rural summit in April, in coordination with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), which focused on what is being done in rural communities to slow down and even reverse job losses and restore economic growth. Four success stories were highlighted, each of which was built on partnerships between the educational system, private sector and government—local, state and federal. Throughout the conference, over 130 state and federal policymakers and experts delved deeply into strategies for establishing public-private partnerships and taking effective action at the local, state and federal levels in support of rural communities.

- School Turnaround -

**Sustaining Turnaround at the School and District Levels: The High Reliability Schools Project at Sandfields Secondary School** - This recently entered research study in the ECS database examines whether effectively turning a school into a High Reliability Organization can turn around a struggling school. The analysis revealed dramatic improvements in student achievement, as well as the quality of teaching, counseling, community engagement, and a range of other desirable outcomes.
- Student Achievement -

**Housing Costs, Zoning, and Access to High-Scoring Schools** - This paper explores potential explanations for school inequality, including large gaps in housing costs, which are correlated with exclusionary zoning laws. The authors demonstrate that limiting the development of inexpensive housing in affluent neighborhoods and jurisdictions fuels economic and racial segregation and contribute to significant differences in school performance across the metropolitan landscape. The authors argue that in order to promote individual social mobility and broader economic security, public policies should address housing market regulations that prohibit all but the very affluent from enrolling their children in high-scoring public schools.

Source: Brookings Institution, April 2012

- Technology -

**Exploring Faculty Decision-Making Processes for Using Instructional Technology in the Classroom: Implications for Policy and Practice** - This brief presents findings from an empirical analysis of course planning and classroom teaching related to instructional technology with the specific aim of providing actionable evidence for policymakers and practitioners. In particular, this analysis focuses on describing the types of instructional technologies faculty consider as part of their local resource base, the specific decision-making “pathways” related to the incorporation of technology into lesson plans, and how faculty actually use technology in the classroom.

Source: Wisconsin Center for the Advancement of Postsecondary Education, 2012

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**What is YOUR State Doing?**

What is your state doing to tackle current education issues? Have you set up interim studies or task forces? Have you located research that has assisted you in developing sound policies? Well, we want to hear about it! Send along any information you consider useful for your fellow legislative staffers, and we will see that it is included in the next issue of *Heads Up*.

Please send information to Emily Workman at eworkman@ecs.org.

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