New Hampshire Receives ECS Frank Newman Award for State Innovation

State recognized for bold high school reforms that replace seat time with personalized learning

Denver – The Education Commission of the States (ECS) will honor New Hampshire’s State Board of Education and Department of Education with the prestigious Frank Newman Award for State Innovation at the 2012 National Forum on Education Policy in Atlanta on July 10. The award recognizes the state’s bold high school reforms that replace the time-based system of Carnegie units with competency-based learning and other innovations taking place in New Hampshire’s K-12 schools.

Since the 2008-09 school year, New Hampshire high school students earn credits based on their mastery of competencies in each course, no matter how little or much time they need. Working with their teachers, students develop individual learning plans that can include traditional classes, online courses, internships, and working with mentors.

New Hampshire’s Education Commissioner Virginia M. Barry said, “New Hampshire educators find that when they adhere to high standards, while introducing multiple ways of achieving that high standard, students attain better outcomes.” Barry commended the Nellie Mae Education Foundation for its invaluable support. The department continues to work with the Stupski Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and others to gain support for innovation, she said.

In 2010-2011, the state achieved an 86.6% graduation rate and the dropout rate is steadily decreasing. Students are benefiting from personalized plans that include extended learning opportunities. Elementary schools are addressing competencies with strategies focused on individual student progress.

“We know students learn in different ways and at different rates. New Hampshire has boldly faced the challenge of individualizing education for students and is showing the rest of the country it can be done,” said Roger Sampson, ECS President.
Since 1988 the ECS Frank Newman Award for State Innovation has recognized states and U.S. territories for innovative education reforms or programs that improve student outcomes on a large scale. Criteria for this award include initiatives that are bold, replicable and hold valuable lessons for other states, and have bipartisan, broad-based support.

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About ECS
Based in Denver, ECS is the only national, nonpartisan organization devoted to education from Pre-K to postsecondary. Since 1965, ECS has helped governors, legislators, state education officials and others identify, develop and implement public policies to improve student learning.