Heads Up on Current Education Issues

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*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!**

**Producing Quality Credentials: Why Data and Analytics Matter** - The latest issue of *The Progress of Education Reform* highlights ways that states can leverage data and accompanying strategies to strengthen the fit between the production of credentials and workforce demand.

**Tuition-Setting Authority for Public Colleges and Universities** - As appropriations to public postsecondary institutions continue to decline, state legislators and higher education leaders have considered the tuition-setting question. This ECS analysis categorizes tuition-setting authority by entity (e.g., legislature, system, institution) and by postsecondary sector (e.g., two- and four-year institutions). It shows that the majority of states vest tuition-setting authority in local institutional boards.

**Vouchers, Scholarship Tax Credits, and Individual Tax Credits and Deductions** This ECS analysis provides details of the existing voucher, scholarship tax credit, and individual tax credit and deduction policies in the states, presents competing perspectives, briefly summarizes the existing research concerning these policies, and offers key policy questions for state leaders to consider

**New from NCSL!**

NCSL's online Education Bill Tracking Database is a user-friendly tool that catalogues enacted bills on a multitude of education issues dating back to 2008. Click here to search enacted bills in all 50-states and territories.
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- Postsecondary Success – Minority Students: Advancing to Completion: Increasing degree attainment by improving graduation rates and closing gaps for African-American students/Hispanic students
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- Teacher Attitudes: Varying Teacher Expectations and Standards: Curriculum Differentiation in the Age of Standards-Based Reform
- Teacher Quality – Professional Learning Standards: Meet the Promise of Content Standards: Investing in Professional Learning
- Charter Schools -

**Learning from the Successes and Failures of Charter Schools** – The authors argue that while charter schools are not a silver bullet for education reform, applying the best practices from some charters to low-performing public schools may increase student achievement. Early data show that the strategy -- applied in Houston and Denver pilot programs -- yielded promising results. Source: Brookings Institution

- Educator Effectiveness -

**State of the States 2012: Teacher Effectiveness Policies** - This report outlines current state policies aimed at identifying effective teachers. The authors found that student achievement is required to be a significant or the most significant factor in teacher evaluations in more states than ever before, and that half of states now require annual evaluation of all teachers. Source: National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ)

**WWC Review of the Report “The Long-Term Impacts of Teachers: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood”** - This report reviews a study that examined differences in student achievement when students were taught by a teacher with high or low value-added effectiveness. The study's authors found a statistically significant increase in reading and math scores when a high value-added teacher started to teach, or a low value-added teacher stopped teaching a group of students. Source: What Works Clearinghouse

- English Language Learners (ELLs) -

**The Cost of Providing an Adequate Education to English Language Learners: A Review of the Literature** - New from the ECS research studies database: This study investigates the treatment of English Language Learner (ELL) students in costing-out methodologies. The authors found that costing-out studies largely under serve ELL students, often aggregating ELL students with low-income or special education students or failing to mention them altogether. Without taking into account the unique needs of each population, states may end up allocating fewer instructional and fiscal resources to student populations with greater needs.

- Governance – SEAs -

**Modernizing the State Education Agency: Different Paths Toward Performance Management** - This report examines eight SEAs on the leading edge of the school turnaround movement: Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Tennessee. The authors find that these states follow one of three main strategies, but common to all is a focus on evidence-based decisions and the need to find enough talent to drive and sustain the transformation. Source: Center for Reinventing Public Education
- Graduation Requirements -

**The Ineffectiveness of High School Graduation Requirement Reforms: A Story of Implementation and Enforcement?** - New from the ECS research studies database: This study explores why increasing graduation requirements has not necessarily increased high school student achievement.

- Leadership – Principals -

**Principal Concerns: Leadership Data and Strategies for States** – This report contains a set of materials that state policymakers can use as they get started in developing and supporting a principal corps for the coming decades. Included in the report are a data guide and a framework for thinking about policies, which states can use as they get started. Also, this brief summarizes a more detailed report that offers a set of powerful new tools to help state policymakers diagnose their principal workforce needs and develop comprehensive strategies to address them.

Source: Center for Reinventing Public Education

- Physical Activity -

**Impact of State Laws on Walking and Bicycling to School**

A new research brief explores the impact of state laws on walking and bicycling to school. The authors found that some laws—such as those requiring crossing guards, speed zones, and traffic calming around schools—were linked to a higher instance of students walking or biking to school. The authors urge school and community leaders to ensure that the areas around schools are designed to make walking and bicycling to school safe and easy.

Source: Active Living Research

- Reading/Literacy -

**Literacy Challenges for the Twenty-First Century** – This report, the latest volume of the *Future of Children* series, discusses ways policymakers and practitioners can help to improve student literacy, including pieces from authors such as Jane Waldfogel, Richard J. Murnane, and Nell Duke.

Source: Brookings Institution and Princeton University

- Student Loan Debt -

**Burden Greatest on Young, Poor: A Record One-in-Five Households Now Owe Student Loan Debt** - This report examines outstanding student loan debt in the context of other family debts, assets, and measures of economic ability to handle the student debt. The report finds that since 2007 the incidence of student debt has increased in nearly every demographic and economic category, as has the size of that debt.

Source: Pew Research Center

- Student Records -

**Data Backpacks: Portable Records & Learner Profiles** - This report is the second in a series of interactive papers that provides specific guidance regarding the adoption of Common Core State Standards and the shift to personal digital learning. The authors contend that management of student records must be updated to meet the evolving needs of teachers and students. They propose a two-part solution:
creating a "data backpack" that follows each student through every transition across their education, and developing an expanded "learner profile" that will power personalization and protect privacy.
Source: Digital Learning Now!

- Teacher Attitudes -

Varying Teacher Expectations and Standards: Curriculum Differentiation in the Age of Standards-Based Reform – New from the ECS research studies database: This study explores whether and how teachers interpret students' social and academic differences in deficit ways when they are expected to assist students with attaining common academic standards.

- Postsecondary Affordability -

Student Debt and the Class of 2011 – This annual report found that the debt levels of students who graduate with loans continues to rise, with two-thirds of 2011 college graduates having student loan debt, averaging $26,600. The report cites considerable variation among states as well as among colleges, with high-debt states concentrated in the Northeast and Midwest.
Source: The Institute for College Access & Success.

- Postsecondary Success - Minority Students -

Advancing to Completion: Increasing Degree Attainment by Improving Graduation Rates and Closing Gaps for African-American Students/Hispanic Students - Two reports outline strategies for boosting college completion and student achievement among Latino and African-American students. The reports highlight colleges that are narrowing graduation rate gaps on their campuses between white students and students of color. The broad trends in these two reports demonstrate the impact that institutional efforts can have on increasing graduation rates and closing gaps.
Source: The Education Trust

- Postsecondary/Workforce Development -

One in Seven - This report ranks youth disconnection in the 25 largest metro areas. The authors found that one in every seven Americans ages 16 to 24 is neither working nor in school – 5.8 million young people in all. The report concludes with a set of recommendations, including moving beyond the "college-for-all" mantra to provide meaningful support and guidance both to students pursuing a four-year bachelor's degree and those interested in career and technical education certificates or associate's degrees.
Source: Measure of America, a project of the Social Science Research Council

- Teacher Quality – Professional Learning Standards -

Meet the Promise of Content Standards: Investing in Professional Learning - This brief details the critical attributes of professional learning necessary to achieve the vision of Common Core standards and addresses the need for long-term commitment and resource investments from the nation and each state to achieve that vision. The brief calls attention to the urgent need for schools, districts, states, regional and national education agencies, and education vendors to change the allocation and
application of professional learning resources. It also recommends new investments for states, districts, and school leaders to make in professional learning.
Source: Learning Forward

What is YOUR State Doing?

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.

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